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**I N D I A**  
**From Primitive Communism**  
**To Slavery**

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S. A. DANGE

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# INDIA

From Primitive Communism  
to Slavery

A Marxist Study of Ancient  
History in Outline

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE

Oct  
1975

First printed in March 1949  
Second revised edition: March 1951  
Third edition: March 1955  
Fourth edition: July 1961  
Fifth edition: December 1972

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Price: Rs. 8.00 (paper)

Price: Rs. 12.50 (cloth) ✓

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Printed by D. P. Sinha at New Age Printing Press, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 55, and published by him for the People's Publishing House, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 55.

To TAI  
Who Stood by Me  
All These Years Through Everything

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

SINCE this book was first published in 1949, many questions regarding the propositions therein have been raised. It is not possible to deal with all of them here, as that would require a long discussion. But some of the questions can be mentioned and answers indicated.

Some people ask whether the people that we see in Vedic literature were of any particular race called Aryans and whether they were invading some other people's land? If they were, who were these other people?

The people seen in Vedic literature, that is, those who are its makers, have been generally described as Aryans in historical literature of our period. Engels mentions them as Indo-Europeans as well as Aryans. There need not be any dogmatism about the name. The main question is about their social formation, the stages of their social development that we can find in the Vedic and other records.

The battles that we find mentioned are of two kinds. Some are between tribes and *Ganas* of the same stock. Some are battles of the Indo-European or Aryan tribes with those of quite another stock—such as those of Nishadas and Nagas. Some of the warring tribes have common institutions of *Yajna*, while some have not and are totally alien to one another.

Thus, all the battles are not 'invasions' as such.

The question of 'invasion' refers to the statements by many European historians that the Aryans came from 'outside India', that they invaded and defeated the Dravidians, who first lived in the whole of India, and drove them southwards.

I do not think the matter is so simple. We do not yet clearly know whether it was the Dravidians who occupied India before the 'alien Aryans' came. We do not yet know whether the Mohenjo Daro and Harappa civilisations represent Dravidians and whether they were, so to say, invaded and destroyed by the Aryans.

The British historians have misled us on many points and we have to do much careful research on this question.



It is also stated, for example, that before the Dravidians, there were the Munda Mon-khmer people who, in their turn, had been earlier driven to the East by the Dravidians.

For myself, I do not hold any finalised views on these matters. Just at present, I am more concerned with the development of the social formations of these people, whether they be Aryans, Dravidians or Munda Mon-khmers, in which, of course, battles and invasions do play a part.

A question is raised whether the Dravidians at the time they clashed with the Aryans had a higher civilisation or a lower one. Had they risen from the primitive commune stage to the advanced stage of slavery?

There is some data to suggest that the people of the Dravidian stock (to use the phrase as it is generally understood) had risen to the stage of slavery. But the extant Dravidian literature is not enough to come to definite conclusions on this matter.

Then there are questions regarding the stages of social development and their periods in Indian history.

Regarding periods, I am not taking into account here the criticism of bourgeois historians, because they do not accept the laws of history discovered by Marx. So, in this respect, I am only dealing with questions raised by Marxist readers.

When did the primitive commune period end and that of slavery begin? If it cannot be measured in terms of years, can it be indicated by the religious-literary records and events?

The Vedic record, as available, refers to all the three periods—of savagery, barbarism and civilisation. It records the rise of slavery (patriarchal or otherwise) and the rudiments of classes and the State.

The primitive commune period can be said to have ended with the early Vedic institutes and the period of slavery and civilisation to have begun with the later Vedic institutes, the early *Smriti* literature and the Epics.

Questions have been raised regarding my characterisation of the Mahabharata war and its aftermath.

In my treatment of this part, some modification or clarification is required. While dealing with the aftermath of the war, I stated in one place that thereafter 'slavery weakened'. At the same time, I stated later in the same para: 'No doubt slavery continued and the slave-owners' states reorganised and grew up



again.' (2nd English edition, page 186). Some clarification of this is necessary.

The Mahabharata war signified the end of kinship relations and the full-fledged rise of the class State. It involved tribal democracies, military aristocracies and slave systems.

The war was so widespread and ruinous that the onward march of civilisation based on a full-fledged slave civilisation was slowed down for a time. But it recovered and built up those imperial kingdoms which we meet with in later history as those of Ujjain, Kashi, Kosala, Maghada, etc.

Therefore, where an impression is created that the Mahabharata war was followed by the ushering in of the period of feudalism, a correction should be made.

A question is raised as to what were the specific features of slavery in India? What role did it play in production?

There are few who would deny altogether the existence of slavery in India. In the face of explicit records stating the kinds<sup>1</sup> of slaves that existed, the rules regarding their liberation and their place in property inheritance, it is difficult for anyone to say that slavery did not exist.

As already stated, it was not the 'labour slavery' of the Roman or Greek type. It was 'domestic slavery'. It only means that agricultural production on large-scale farms owned by slave-owners and worked by gangs of slaves was not the dominant form of production. But, in contrast with this, domestic slavery does not mean that the slave did only 'personal service' to the master in the household. There is enough evidence to show that the slaves were set to production of household manufactures, on farms and even large-scale estates, along with 'free' peasants and even hired labourers. Slave-owners also hired out their slaves for work to bring income for their owners.

Large-scale estates cultivated by slaves and hired servants are generally found near the town-centres and are found to be properties of kings. A few private landlords also are mentioned, some of whom are even pious Brahmins. But agricultural production in the countryside was not carried on mainly by means of slaves. There the free household community led by the *Grihapati* or *Kulapati* cultivated the common land. The em-

<sup>1</sup> For this and subsequent references see *Appendix II*, p. 175.



ployment of slaves on a considerable scale prevailed in the town-centres of handicrafts and, to some extent, in the villages.

This intertwining of the household community with domestic slavery and its existence over a long period without slavery supplanting other forms is a *specific feature of Indian slavery*.

The household community, with the growth in population and development of production, soon breaks up and grows into a village community. The slave groups become the *heena jatis* of the village community and the members of the household community taking to different trades according to their choice of skill or need become crystallised into different castes. In this process the *Varnas* lose their validity and castes replace them in the structure of the new organisation—the village community.

The development of this process is not uniform. It is conditioned by the local land conditions. The climatic and geographical conditions in India, with its tropical weather, its high fertility and abundance of vegetation, determined the peculiar physiognomy of the village community, the persistence of common ownership of land and of the caste system.

*The village community with its caste system is the basis of the structure of Indian feudalism.*

This process requires a careful investigation and study of the concrete conditions in which it took place in the various parts of India. Because caste and village communities in India, while basically remaining the same in their production relations, show varying features in their development in matters of rigidity, changeability and rights and obligations.

Questions are raised as to how long the slave-owning states lasted. I consider that the slave states flourished till about the rise and growth of Buddhism. Most probably, the Empire of the Nandas (413 B.C.) was the last in that line. (Hence, it is, perhaps, that all the Puranic traditions state that the real *Kshatriya Kula* rule as such ended with the Nandas—*Nandantam Kshatriyakulam*.)

Between the Nandas and the Empire of Asoka (273 B.C.) big changes were taking place in the socio-economic organisation of the Indian people. Both slavery and the village community were undergoing radical changes. Indian feudalism was trying to strike its roots and spread.

But it must be remembered here that the vanishing of one



system and the rise of another is never so clearly demarcated as to be identified with a definite year or kingly dynasty, especially with regard to slavery and feudalism in India. For a time, they exist side by side also and it is known that feudal serfdom carries within it certain features of slavery also.

But it appears certain that Buddhism and Jainism in the 5th century B.C. represented ideological revolts against slavery.

Though the subject cannot be discussed at length in this short preface, yet, in order to help readers to further study, we may point out the ancestry of the Jainist thought which is the same as of the Buddhist.

Mahavir Jaina, according to the Jaina system, was preceded by twenty-four *Tirthankaras*. The accounts of six of them, as available in the *Saddharmalankara*, show that four of them were runaway slaves and two of them ruined peasants or nearly of the same status as slaves. The name of one was Poorna Kashyap (complete Kashyap). He was so called because when he was born in the house of his mother's owner, he became the hundredth slave in the house of the master and 'completed' his master's century! The names of others who founded materialist or near-materialist sects were *Mokkhali Go-shal*, *Niganth Natputta*, *Ajit Keshakambali Pakudha Katyayana*.

Buddha himself (born 558 B.C.—died 478 B.C.) descended from tribal aristocracies and had the culture of tribal democracy.

In this connection, it is worth noting the remark of Engels in his work entitled *Ludwig Feuerbach*. Engels says:

Great historical turning points have been accompanied by religious changes only so far as the three world religions which have existed up to the present—*Buddhism*, Christianity and Islam—are concerned. . . . Only with these world religions, arisen more or less artificially, particularly Christianity and Islam, do we find that general historical movements acquire a religious imprint.<sup>2</sup>

What was 'the great historical turning point' to which Buddhism gave company and its imprint? This historical turning point, so far as India is concerned in relation to Buddhism, is the weakening of the system of slavery as represented by the rule of the imperial dynasties from Ajatashatru to Asoka. The

<sup>2</sup> Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, pp. 343-44 (Emphasis added).



most powerful kingdom in this line seems to have been that of the Nandas. The vast standing armies<sup>3</sup> maintained by the Nandas and their contemporaries signified high taxes on the people and corruption and luxury of the ruling classes. Their conquest had pressed thousands of people into slavery, had destroyed tribal democracies and the remnants of the *gentile* communities over large tracts of the land. The free peasantry in the villages, the ruined tribals, the harassed merchants and the householders of the towns were all looking out for a change. Ideologically that change spoke through Buddhism. Politically, it overthrew the Empire through the Mauryas but again to reproduce new ones, though with some relief and changes. That was the turning point in history we have to study carefully. The document that can guide us in this is first and foremost the *Kautaliya Arthashastra*. Then, there are the *Jatakas* of Buddhist literature, some of the *Dharma-sutras* and the edicts of Asoka.

The weakening of slavery and its gradual replacement by feudalism goes on as a process for some three hundred years. In its economic base in the villages, it brings about profound changes.

The primitive commune of early days produced its wealth on land and cattle in common and shared the product in common consumption.

With the advance in productive forces, the coming in of division of labour and the rise of classes, the slave system arose. Production on the common land by the *gentile* villager then begins to be carried out by the *Gana* peasantry with the help of slaves, though most of the work is yet done by the free peasantry itself.

A *gentile* society being in essence incompatible with slavery, it is soon corroded by the latter and the primitive *gens* disappears.

In the towns, the rising aristocracies amassed wealth and slaves, traded in goods, built up their kingdom and empires. The king's manufactures and estates, the merchant's household, workshops and garden lands around the town, were worked by groups of slaves; free artisans and even hired labourers were also used.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix III, p. 178.



Production advanced, population grew and so also the empires. Between the free peasant villages, working either as gentile communities holding land in common or as household communities with common land ownership but individual cultivation on the one hand, and top-heavy imperial states on the other, there developed intense contradictions and antagonisms on the question of land. This antagonism expressed itself in two questions. Could the king appropriate the common land of the villages? How much was the share of the State in the total production? That is, what were the rights of the ruling class in relation to the surplus product, to rent.

Parts of *Dharma* literature and the commentaries from the *Poorva Mimamsa* downwards are concerned with this question. Kautilya tries to restore order in the relations of exploitation and to limit the right to surplus or rent by minute rules. The *Poorva Mimamsa* debates the question of the right of the king to *Dana* and says that he has no right to give land as *Dana* (gift). Why? Because, it says, 'land is common', is not individual property. (*Na-Bhumi syat—sarvanprati—avishishtatyat.*) It was perhaps not even individually demarcated or appropriated.

But the ruling classes, bit by bit, beat down this position, increase taxes and rent—their share of the surplus—and appropriate the common lands. The jurists in the service of the exploiting classes then raised the question—what is common land, is there not a village common and a king's common, are there not two kinds of common lands?—one that can be given away by the king and one that cannot be given away, and so on. They also raised the question as to what share of the product the State could take as taxes (rent)

And as we advance in history, we find the State, *i.e.*, the exploiting classes, gradually increasing the rent collected from various sections of the producers. It increases in agriculture from one-tenth of the product to one half and even money rent and taxes rear their heads. The struggle to keep the common land intact, the struggle to keep down rent and taxes, is the key to the rise and fall of the empires from Nandas onwards, and sometimes before them also (except, of course, when it is not due to alien invasion as those of the Kushanas and Scythians).

In this process, the productive forces also grow. Handicrafts develop on a large scale and in skill. Agriculture develops



varied lines and undergoes changes in its production relations also.

The old gentile community, when it vanished, gave place to a new community, which owned land in common but tilled it on the basis of household communities at some stages and in some areas. The household community later on gave place to the village community, cultivating land on the basis of individual households. The development of skill and instruments of production, which attached themselves to definite families and carrying on their trades in hereditary manner created a hereditary division of labour in these communities and gave birth to the caste system, and a new village community based on caste. That became the classical structure of Indian feudalism.

We might say that whereas the four *Varna* system (*Varnashrama Dharma*) is the juridical-ethical expression of the period of later stages of barbarism and also of slavery and civilisation, the caste-system (*Jati Dharma*) is the expression of the rise and growth of Indian feudalism. This system, displacing the old household community village or *Varnasharma* village,, was an alternative to slavery and best suited to the new forces of production. Most probably, it started its career with the Mauryas and later spread in the days of the Gupta Empire (about 200 A.D.) and became the unchanging rigid base of feudalism for all the centuries to come. Of course, it did not spread to all parts of India simultaneously.

Here, a question has been raised as to what is the meaning of Marx's reference to the 'extremely ancient', 'the unchanging' village communities of India in his various writings.

To my mind, these references of Marx have been interpreted in a mechanical and dogmatic way and discussion of this question is necessary.

On the question of land relations in India and the village community, Marx had not come to a final conclusion. He was from time to time studying Indian history in its various aspects and periods. At one time, he thought that there was no private property in land in India. Then, later research showed that there was private property in land in the Krishna valley, which he mentions in his letters to Engels.

Similarly, the question of the development of the *gens* and the village community was also not finalised until Engels came to



write *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

The village community which Marx finds in India from the writings of the authors whom he quotes in Volume 1 of *Capital* is not the same as the gentile community of primitive communism nor the same as the household community. The gentile community was based on kinship and had no relations of exploiter-exploited, while the village community was a territorial unit and had such relations.

Engels, while discussing this question in *The Origin of the Family*, at first had not mentioned these developments. But basing himself on Kovalevsky's work, he clarified the question in the 1891 edition of his book. From that, one can see that even when land is held in common by a community, the *form* in which it is held and the production carried on by the communities shows *three types*.

One is the most primitive gentile community based on purely kinship relations. (May we say the *Gana* form?)

The second type is the household community based on patriarchal relationship. (May we say the *Kula* or *Grihapati* form?)

The third type is the village community consisting of individual households, holding some land in common and some as individual allotment and carrying on tillage and other economic activity on the basis of individual households, grouped together by castes—the Gram Panchayat form. Herein individual and common ownerships exist side by side.

The village community which Marx speaks of is of the third type. It did not exist in the period of primitive communism where there was no *Varna* or caste. It did not exist in the early days of the rise of classes, *Varna* and slavery. It arose only on the fall of the latter and became a caste-community village of Indian feudalism.

It expresses different relations of production than the others.

We cannot pursue the growth and development of the village community and of Indian feudalism in this short note. The coming into existence of the village community, with its hereditary division of labour by castes, developed the productive powers of society. Each caste and sub-caste, specialising in its own craft, developed it to the highest pitch possible for handicrafts. On the basis of the growth of productivity, also grew the sur-



plus extracted by the ruling classes and the State. From this surplus were maintained the public works of water supply and irrigation and also those monuments of architecture as have been preserved for us. The rich culture, the flowering of art and literature of the Gupta Empire, the vast irrigation works (one of the water works of Kashmir was built by an untouchable builder-engineer), the big trade and commerce of the medieval eras—all were the achievements of the productive powers developed by the village community, its agriculture and handicrafts and the special projection of the latter in the towns of the medieval kingships.

At the same time, Marx points out the obstruction to progress that these communities became and the stagnation that they generated in the course of their history. These passages of Marx are familiar to all students of our history and do not need repetition.

Students of history, however, would like to find the way to study the development of the class struggle in those village communities or rather the struggle of classes in the Indian feudal relations. From Marx's description of these village communities, some people are inclined to argue that these self-sufficing communities were so made that there was no internal class-contradiction and struggle among them.

While studying the village communities in his articles on India, Marx was mainly concerned with pointing out the new forces of production and revolution introduced by the British conquest.

While writing about them again in *Capital*, he was dealing only with the question of the division of labour in the workshop ushered in by capitalist production as contrasted with the division of labour in a society represented by the village community, its structure of a self-sufficing economy, its existence through thousands of years and its comparative unconcern with the vicissitudes of the ruling State.

In both these places, Marx gave us a profound understanding of the structure of Indian feudalism. But in both places, he was only dealing with one or the other aspect of the matter. He was not at that time concerned with an exhaustive and all-sided treatment of the subject, which he was going to give us if he lived to write the history of India and for which he was already col-



lecting material. Hence, it appears, the question of the development of the class struggle inside these village communities, the struggle between them on the one hand and the feudal State on the other, still remains to be studied. In order to study this, we have to cover the whole period from the Mauryas to the Mughals and the Marathas, a period of two thousand years.

It would be a denial of Marxism itself if one were to say that during these two thousand years these communities developed no inner contradictions, developed no antagonism and struggles within themselves or had no struggle with the feudal State that ruled over them.

What was then the essence of the struggles inside these communities and of their struggles with the State?

Each caste and caste-family in the village community had its land allotted to it for tillage. It could also draw on the resources of the common land, that is, the land which contained forests, water supplies, grass, etc. (described as *Mahabhumi* in *Dharma* literature). Land for tillage was available to every family. But certain castes were attached to their definite handicrafts such as weaving, oil making, leather tanning, scavengering, guarding, etc., besides having land. Agriculture and handicrafts were thus intergrated with each other.

Each handicraft caste supplied its product to the other in exchange for its product, oil for leather, woodwork for iron, etc. Thus, the product of each one's labour circulated in the village or in the group of villages.

There were, however, castes which did not labour and produce as such. They were the Brahmins doing teaching, worship, season-watching, etc. Then there were the Kshatriya castes, soldier families in service with the State, or revenue officials and accountants with different names in different areas. Wherefrom did they get 'payments' for their work? It was from the village products of the labouring castes, a share of the surplus from their products. These non-producing castes lived on the products of the producing castes, that is, they lived on rent surrendered to them by the producers. *In that sense they were feudal rent-receivers.*

Did they get rent on the basis of ownership of land? No. But they had the right to rent.

Was the right upheld by force of the State? Yes.



The other castes were *tied to their place in production*, to the particular production of handicrafts and agriculture and the share of the product that they had to yield to the others was also laid down and *enforced*. The enforcing authority was the State, which was run on the basis of the *Dharma* and wielded by the Brahmin and the Kshatriya ruling sections at the State centres and in the village community.

Were these relations founded on hierarchy and personal dependence, by adherence to which alone the others could produce and live? Yes, they were. If they failed, the producers, that is, rent-paying castes, were physically punished.

It is these characteristics of the village community that made it a clearly defined feudal relation. Hereditary serfdom of a type was the foundation of these village communities. The untouchable castes were the most exploited serfs of the ruling classes in the community.

The same relation expressed itself in the domain of political rule. The State belonged to the ruling, non-producing castes, the Brahmin and the Kshatriya communities in which the revenue-official castes (*viz.*, Kayastha) also shared.

The struggle inside the communities was for extraction of more and more rent by the rent-receivers. This was the subject matter of laws on *Bali* and *Bhaga*. The Brahmin, the Kshatriya and the revenue official would always try to increase his *Bhaga* and *Bali* from the producing castes. And how these were determined in exact quantities is laid down in all the *Dharma* literature. Even the number of *pan* leaves, cocoanuts and betelnuts that are to be given as *Bhaga* is minutely described in many records. A violation of these was attended with punishment of the serf-caste by the ruling caste.

The struggle of the village with the State, that is, of the producing castes alone or of the whole village sometimes when all made a front against the State on a particular issue, was also founded on the question of the *Bali* and *Bhaga* to be paid to the State—the King. In this struggle many a time, when the matter could not be settled peacefully, armed skirmishes took place or the village community migrated from one State to another State, where it expected to get less harsh terms of rent.

Inside the village communities, when the non-producing ruling castes extorted exorbitant rent and ruined agriculture and handi-



crafts, accumulated money through high taxes and ruined trade, or failed to defend the village from robbers or invaders, then the people protested by refusing to pay the rent, either in kind or labour-service. And the whole of this state of affairs would be bewailed as the 'failure of each caste' to observe its own *Dharma*. And the solution of the 'crisis' was to restore everyone to his caste, *Dharma*, and thus 'peace'. The literature of the saints of the tenth to the sixteenth centuries in various parts of India is full of this question.

The changes in the *Bali* and *Bhaga* dues and rights have been discussed by many scholars and the character of Indian feudal rent-relations stands out clearly through them. Only, they have not been frankly characterised by their class name. Often there is a tendency not to expose the relations of exploitation, whose forms they are and against which there have been battles and protests in the history of India.

One word about the discussion of the difference between *Bali* and *Bhaga*. Our professors of history have been trying their best to define the difference between these two, as also about other rent-imposts.

The *Bali* is the most ancient form of surplus given by the producing section to the non-producing. It arose when the division between physical labour and intellectual labour arose, by means of which certain people were spared by the primitive commune to watch the seasons, the heavens, etc. for common social good and were fed from the share left for them from the product of the commune. That was *Bali*. It was also given to the warrior sections of the commune and its head. But it was *not rent* in those conditions.

When the commune broke up, classes and the State arose, when the division between town and country and between agriculture and handicrafts grew and became fixed, the surplus began to be appropriated in the new form—the *Bhaga*. It was the name for the rent-revenue paid to the State, for the rent appropriated by the non-producing ruling castes, as also the name for exchange between handicraft and agriculture, where money was not used. There was no question of *exchange* between slaves and slave-owners. *Bhaga* became the fixed and the classical form of rent relation, when the feudal village commu-



nity came into existence. And the former *Bali* also became its companion.

How the demands of the State and the feudal ruling castes used to increase and led to conflict, is not a subject that can be further developed here. It can only be indicated that if we take hold of *Bali* and *Bhaga* as between the castes inside the villages and as between the villages and the State and as between the town-councils (*Paura Sabhas*) and the king, we shall get the clue to the class struggles of Indian feudalism, of course, not forgetting the basis—that is, the struggle to keep the common land safe from the inroads of the king's domain.

Who are called great kings and leaders of people, then, under such conditions? Great were they who restored the collapsing *Dharma*, that is, restored just and proper relations of *Bali* and *Bhaga*, protected the people from the excessive exploitation and from ruinous charges of *Bali* and *Bhaga* and even fought battles in their defence. The saints used to become the ideological propagandists, and the popular warriors were the armed fighting defenders of the exploited whose only demand in those conditions of Indian feudalism could be: 'Let *Dharma* be restored and each caste do its duty and take its proper place and share in the social organism.' If that *equilibrium* were disturbed, then there would be the end of the world.

In order to strictly clarify this, the *Sukraniti* in its laws had even to define the number of holidays with pay and sick leave that the State should give to its employees and servants, which even the modern capitalist States in their early days failed to do until the working class banged its fist on their heads.

In studying this phase of our history, we have also to pay attention to the merchant, who has occupied an important place in the development of Indian feudalism. It was his attempt to convert as much of the products of the village community as possible into *commodities*. But the more the products of the producing caste became commodities, the more would be the demand of those who received rent in kind; because that rent they would sell to the merchant for gold or other things.

But the greater the demand for a commodity from the merchants, the greater would be the disturbance in the traditional proportionality of the division of labour and product inside the village community. It would also become the starting point of



pronounced inequalities of wealth in the village community and accentuate all the inherent contradictions. Hence the activities of the merchant were not favoured by those who wanted a peaceful growth and continuation of the village community economy.

Still merchant capital played its role, existed and grew.

If one wants to know the Indian medieval conception of an ideal merchant-banker, one should refer to the famous Charudatta in *Mrichchakatika*.

Why could it not grow to the point of giving birth to the bourgeoisie and set bourgeois development going in our history?

This will bring us to modern history which I am unable to pursue in this place.

One more very important aspect to which our historians have to pay attention while studying Indian feudalism is the path it opened for the formation of various *nationalities* in India after the decay of slavery and the fall of the Nanda Empire. The rise and development of some of the present nationalities in India (*viz.*, the Andhras and the Marathas) seems to have taken place in this and the subsequent periods.

It is not an accident that it is in this period of the beginnings of Indian feudalism, the new village community and nationalities, arising on the break-up of the slave system and the big empires, that the *Prakrit languages*, which had been growing within the womb of the empires, came forward in history and established themselves as 'recognised' languages. Their grammar and literature as represented by Vararuchi and Gunadhya grew up independently and vigorously. Sanskrit receded to the background and became a 'court language' or the jargon of the ruling intelligentsia to codify their laws and religious decrees. It appears that the growth of nationalities and the recognition of *Prakrits* go hand in hand with the rise and growth of Indian feudalism. The first kingdom that declared the *Prakrit* as its official language as against Sanskrit was that of the Satavahanas, a dynasty which is reported to have had its origin in peasant communities. It was not merely a freak that the shrewd Asoka also put his *Shasanas* in *Prakrits*.

The question of nationalities and the question of linguistics have rich material for study in this very famous period of our history.

I have written these few lines in the hope that our Marxist readers will find time for further clarification and discussion of this subject. As at present situated, I regret I cannot find time and energy to elaborate these questions or write the further volumes of history I had planned.

*New Delhi*  
*November 1954*

S. A. DANGE



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS book was mainly drafted in Yeravada Jail in the period of October 1942 to January 1943.

Hence some of the limitations that the reader will find in the treatment of the subject.

I have not been able to deal with the subject with all the fullness it requires and I could not use or cite all the data that is available in the ancient Sanskrit literature in original or the digest of such literature by modern scholars.

I hope someone better equipped than myself will be able to do it for our working class.

I had no intention of writing this book at the time I did. It arose as a result of the innumerable questions which the political prisoners around me in Yeravada Jail at that time raised and wanted me to answer.

The Battle of Stalingrad was in full swing then, and questions of war, socialism, class struggle, the superiority of the Soviet system, etc. were hot in the air.

Why do wars take place, how to differentiate one war from another, what are classes, what is the state, what distinguishes one state from another, how to abolish wars once for all, will mankind always require a state and government, how to solve the problem of poverty? etc., etc.

For a short while I had been permitted to mix with Congress prisoners. We had talks and I found that unless I went to the root of the matter and gave them an outline of the rise of the classes and state in Indian society from the viewpoint of historical materialism, they would not be satisfied. They were fresh young men who were eager to learn and understand.

But soon certain events took place and our association with each other was cut off by the British jailors.

After my release from jail, I left for Europe for the Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions and the book was relegated to the background. The claims of the day-to-day working-class struggles were more pressing.

During the country-wide searches of the offices of the Communist Party and trade unions and homes of Communists,



ordered by Sardar Patel, Home Member of the Government of India, on January 14, 1947, in connection with the booklet *Operation Asylum*, a publication which revealed the British Government's military operational plans against the Indian people, a part of this manuscript and its notes were carried away by the police, probably mistaking the Sanskrit quotations for some code language. But fortunately the papers were afterwards returned.

And lastly the question—is it necessary to spend one's time on such a subject since the present volume deals only with the origin of family, private property, classes and the state in ancient India?

The readers will excuse me, if in answer, I quote an extract from Lenin.

In his lecture to the students of the Sverdlov University in 1919, on the State, Lenin said :

‘...the question is so complex and has been so confused by bourgeois scholars and writers that anybody who desires to study this question seriously and to master it independently must attack it several times, return to it again and again and consider the question from various angles in order to obtain a clear and definite understanding of it. And it will be all the easier to return to this question because it is such a fundamental, such a basic question of all politics, and because not only in such stormy and revolutionary times as the present, but even in the most peaceful times, you will come across this question in any newspaper in connection with any economic or political question (*Marx-Engels Marxism*, Moscow, 1951. p. 491).

In referring to the confusion created by the representatives of bourgeois science on this subject, Lenin says :

To this day this question is very often confused with religious questions; not only representatives of religious doctrines (it is quite natural to expect it of them), but even people who consider themselves free from religious prejudice, very often confuse the specific question of the state with questions of religion and endeavour to build up a doctrine—very often a complex one, with an ideological, philosophical approach and argumentation—which claims that the state is something divine, something supernatural, that it is a certain force, by virtue of which mankind has lived, and which confers on people, or which can confer on people, which brings with it, something that is not of man, but is given him from without—that is a force of divine origin. And it must be



said that this doctrine is so closely bound up with the interests of the exploiting classes—the landlords and the capitalists—so serves their interests, has so deeply permeated all the customs, views and science of the gentlemen who represent the bourgeoisie, that you will meet with relics of it on every hand, even in the view of the state held by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who reject with disgust the suggestion that they are under the sway of religious prejudices and are convinced that they can regard the state with sober eyes. This question has been so confused and complicated because it affects the interests of the ruling classes more than any other (yielding in this respect only to the foundations of economic science) (*Ibid.*, pp. 491-93).

Our Mensheviks and Socialists might note !

Telling the students how to approach the question, Lenin says :

To approach this question as scientifically as possible we must cast at least a fleeting glance back on the history of the rise and development of the state. The most reliable thing in a question of social science, and one that is most necessary in order really to acquire the habit of approaching this question correctly and not allowing oneself to get lost in the mass of detail or in the immense variety of conflicting opinions—the most important thing in order to approach this question scientifically is not to forget the underlying historical connection, to examine every question from the standpoint of how the given phenomenon arose in history and what principal stages this phenomenon passed through in its development, and, from the standpoint of its development, to examine what the given thing has become today. (*Ibid.*, pp. 493-94).

And proceeding further, he says :

I hope that in connection with the question of the state you will acquaint yourself with Engels' book—*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. This is one of the fundamental works of modern Socialism. . . . (*Ibid.*, p. 494).

That is why, as the reader will notice, this book closely follows the above-mentioned work of Engels, in dealing with the same subject in Indian history, which, unfortunately, Engels had not enough sources to do when he wrote his celebrated work.

In this preface, I do not wish to discuss the sources I have used or make a thankful reference to the numerous friends who provided me with books, etc. I will leave that for the second volume, if ever it gets the chance to see the light of the day.

S. A. DANGE

UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

Acc. No. *6266*

Author .....

Title *Kashmir Britain*

*and the English  
settlements.*



## INTRODUCTORY

# CONTEMPORARY LINES OF STUDIES IN INDIAN HISTORY

INDIA is one of those countries in the world which became centres of man's civilisation in the most ancient times. It is one of the seven countries in the world, where foodplants originated,<sup>1</sup> were picked up by man and cultured and spread. It is yet an unsolved question, as to where primeval man differentiated from the four-footed animal, became the tool-making two-handed social man, fought wild Nature, survived and grew world over. Remnants of skulls and bones of ancient man, which lead anthropologists in the track of early man, have been found in China, Java, Europe, Africa, etc. And those who would want India also to share in that 'honour,' would point to the Sivalik Hills<sup>2</sup> and researches there to give us a share of that semi-man, semi-animal, to complete our claim to be an ancient cradle of human origin and civilisation. Indian historians of India are very particular on this point of our ancientness and the age of our civilisation.

Indian writers and historians had almost developed a craze to prove that not only were we ancient but that everything that now exists in the world, as part of civilisation, was once with us and we knew it all—in science, philosophy, politics, etc. If Kant was great in philosophy, our Sankara was one greater; if Shakespeare was great in literature, our Kalidasa was one greater; if you had Rousseau's social contract in politics, we too had one like it. We had aeroplanes, railways, explosives and what not.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. N. I. Vavilov, *Science At Crossroads*.

<sup>2</sup> F. Boas, *Anthropology*.



And we had all these, when the English or Europeans were wearing bearskins!

That last idea was the real driving force of our historians. We dug up our ancient walls and moats, our *bhoorjapatras* and papyri to build a defence against the foreign enemy, who was trying to annihilate us. History was used by the English rulers of India to demoralise the rising freedom movement, to build a psychosis in the leadership of the people that compared to world history, its age, its achievement, India and its people were nowhere; and whatever of its history was known led to one conclusion that this country and its people were historically destined to be always conquered and ruled by foreign invaders. Geography, climate and culture inevitably doomed us to this fate. Serious and responsible historians of the *Cambridge History* and other works<sup>3</sup> propagated this thesis. In order to fight it, our historians went to prove that India's history really almost begins world history of present Man, that the Aryan, who today peoples this land, spread out from the Arctic<sup>4</sup> regions several thousand years ago, and in India he produced the best of everything that man could or will ever do again. He refused to be annihilated.

Such militant history writing had its use, no doubt, in the struggle against the British power. But just as it gave the Indian Nationalist a certain morale, it also gave him a false sense of values regarding the past and made him venerate everything that was of the past, but had ceased to be of use in the present, or had become a positive hindrance.

Students of history today will be amused to read the millions of words spent in arguing, for example, whether the death of Afzal Khan at the hands of Shivaji was moral or not, whether it was ordinary 'murder', 'assassination', or a permissible kill in the battle. The celebrated volume of Jayaswal on ancient *Hindu Polity* was written with the motive to refute the assertions of the British ruling class that India was unfit for parliamentary

<sup>3</sup> Fraser, *Introduction to Ancient History*.

<sup>4</sup> Tilak, *Arctic Home in the Vedas*. He says that by his theses he has shown that: 'The interglacial Aryan civilisation and culture must have been of a higher type than is usually supposed to be: and that there is no reason why the primitive Aryans should not be placed on an equal footing with the pre-historic inhabitants of Egypt on point of culture and civilisation' (1925 Edition, p. 464).



democratic institutions, by showing that ancient India had republics and 'self-governing democracies'. The English spoke as the inheritors of the civilisation of Greece and Rome, claimed the first place in ancient civilisation for them and for Egypt and Palestine; they denied that the *Mahabharata* had any meaning or reality, that the *Vedas* of the Hindus were a historical record or that our history could go beyond that of the Greeks, whose Alexander conquered some parts of India.

Our intelligentsia chafed. We had no papyrus Prisse to prove our age, no pyramids of Gizeh, a real massive record, nor mummies of Akhnaton and Tutankhamen; no towns dug up like Ur and Babylon to speak for us. The archaeological department of a foreign power was not interested in that. Independently of the support from the State or the rich in the land, our historians toiled to collect their own records. The copper-plates of kings recording gifts to Brahmins, stone-engravings, coins and writings such as on the Asoka Pillars, were collected to unravel the past. Astronomical observations in religious textbooks pushed historical memory to even 3,000 or 4,000 B.C. But it was not given the credence of history.<sup>5</sup>

Until at last a real town was found and dug out, that of Mohenjo Daro in Sind, which led even the European masters to say that civilisation here could be traced to 3,000 B.C. We were not less ancient than the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chaldeans, etc. ! So we are an old country, an old people, wise with history, with big memory, and we can live, fight, survive and go ahead.

It is not possible to take a survey of the growth of our historical literature, to speak of the innumerable sacrifices of many of our intellectuals, to build a consistent story of our historical past. The works of Tilak, Rajwade, Ranade, Jayaswal, Paogi, Kunte, Bhandarkar, Kelkar and a host of others (including a few Europeans also), whom it is not possible to list here, have done a great deal to lay down the outlines of the history of India. Some amount of raw material has been put down in print. But

<sup>5</sup> See *Orion* by Tilak; *Vedanga Jyotish* by Dixit; and the discussions on the date of the Bharat War and the *Vedas* by several authors. The European writers had assigned 1,500 B.C. as the earliest date for the *Vedas* and 1,000 B.C. for the Bharat War. On the other hand, the Sumerian, Egyptian and other antiquities were dated between 6,000 to 4,000 B.C.



so far most of that material has been presented with one purpose—to combat the view of Indian history as given by the European (British) writers. History writing, thus, was a weapon of national struggle and was wielded as such, purposefully by our writers in the 19th century.

History with them was not merely a discovery of cold facts or truths, which had not been found before, or if found, used wrongly. It was not a disinterested discovery of facts. The facts were, as if, a marshalling of an army for defence in a war. Truths they were, no doubt, but laid out in a way to battle with the enemy.

Afzal Khan was killed—it is a fact; but relate this fact in a proper setting and do not argue like the English that Shivaji was a treacherous man, that all Marathas are so and their ethics is low. The Asoka Pillar is a truth, a fact, and its age shows that two thousand years ago we preached such nice virtues and had such a kingdom to live in. And five thousand years ago, Mohenjo Daro had bathrooms, tiles and a town. So do not say we were not civilised before you came to teach us and that we cannot do it again without you.

Writing of history, then, with our scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was an ideological weapon in the battle of Indian nationalism against the imperialist power—a claim for independence on the basis of age, lineage, ancient capacities and wisdom, and inspiring its readers to defy the invader and not cower before him, to feel confident of survival and victory as we did through hoary history.

But such a view of history led nowhere except to a certain morale and confidence against the foreign invader.

Here one has to ask the question: whom did this intelligentsia represent and to whom were they trying to give this morale and confidence? It is a fact of history that till the post-war crisis of the first world war, the overwhelming masses of the people had not yet stepped into revolutionary upheavals against the British power. Till the crisis of 1905, the intelligentsia which led the national movement had scarcely gone to the masses to inspire them with struggle and give them slogans for that purpose. The petty-bourgeois leadership, and the liberal bourgeoisie who spoke through its historic writings, was just formulating its platform of Dominion Status, *i.e.*, its claim, its



fitness to rise to the status of the ruling imperialist bourgeoisie — with an identical economy, parliamentary democracy, etc.

That readings of Indian history were used by the rising bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia to historically justify and present its class and national aims, is very vividly seen from a few of the representative works and their authors of this period. The Indian bourgeoisie had not yet come to a unified understanding of its own aims; it had not yet grown to that level. Its weaknesses, contradictions and conflicting political platforms came to the fore in its historical writings, when the crucial question—that of the *methods* and *platform* of the political struggle against the British power—was raised. Every section agreed in the historical conclusions regarding India's age and lineage, its ancient wealth and wisdom, compared to its present poverty and degradation. But when the question was raised, what weapons, social and political, from the armoury of what historical period, are we to use in the present struggle, the bourgeoisie, its intelligentsia, divided and fell apart. All its seeming unity on the ancient past fell to pieces. Historical facts, personages and periods were seized anew and written upon—

*firstly*: according to the political platform of each bourgeois faction in relation to its approach to the problem of struggle against imperialism; and

*secondly*: according to the attitude of the exploiting class, of the landlord-bourgeois combine in India, towards the exploited millions of the country, who were bond-slaves both of the foreign imperialist bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.

The problem of finding a method and platform to combat the British conquest raised the question as to why the English succeeded in defeating the Mughals and the Marathas, especially the latter, with whom alone the British had to wage the final serious battles for the conquest of India. The powerful conquerors of India before the British were the Mughals, whom the Marathas, under the leadership of Shivaji, had succeeded in defeating. Why then had the Marathas failed against the British? Why had they succeeded against the Mughals? Answers to these two questions should be enough to suggest new ways and means to achieve freedom from the new conqueror.



Writers on history plunged with great vigour and spirit into these questions. The Maratha-Mughal relations being still fresh in men's minds and being still a part of social reality, the middle-class intelligentsia and the bourgeois-nationalist press devoted great attention to the discussion of the problem.

The paucity of material and the obstruction put by the foreign rulers hampered even historical studies a great deal. The authorities refused to open the archives of the Maratha courts for study by the students of history. The princely houses surviving on the ruins of the Marathas and the Mughals, loyal to the new masters and in fear of losing their ill-gotten rulerships, refused to open their archives. Big feudal landlords and baron-houses shunned the historians. Because all these three were afraid of the skeletons in their cupboards, afraid to let the people know the secrets of their past. Yet the persistence of the students did yield some material. And then began the real skirmishes and battles.

Long before the Indian writers could speak of any history, British writers, using the material that came their way during the course of their conquest and plunder, had already produced some works on Indian history. Elphinstone, Grant Duff, Briggs, Todd, Moreland, &c. had produced their volumes, on the basis of which the world was already being 'educated' in Indian history.

The Indian writers who came after them had to begin by combating their perversions, wrong delineations and understanding of Indian events and history. But when it came to presenting their own viewpoint, the results were not less confusing or more flattering. They led to certain conclusions, which the liberal bourgeoisie later on tried to use as its platform for the future.

Leaving aside the voluminous research publications, if we only take a few of the representative works, we can easily see what view our bourgeois intelligentsia took of Indian history, which was supposed to lead them in the future battles with the new enemy.

M. G. Ranade, a judge of the Bombay High Court, wrote *The Rise of the Maratha Power*, trying to lay bare the springs that gave success to the Maratha rising under Shivaji. In 1918, on the centenary of the fall of the Peshwas, N. C. Kelkar, a



famous essayist and scholar of the liberal school, wrote *The Marathas and the English*, trying to analyse where the latter scored over the former. V. K. Rajwade poured out volumes of research material on the Maratha defeat at Panipat, the driving force of Shivaji's rising, the caste squabbles and personal intrigues of the Maratha courts, the armaments and technique of the English, etc. Major Basu did a volume on the *Rise of Christian Power in India*. And there were a number of books on the Independence War of 1857. The conclusions arrived at by each of these typical writers will show us the way history was being understood by the rising intelligentsia of our country—conclusions which were to be a guide for the future battles.

Ranade made the saints and their sects of the 16th and 17th centuries, their religious fervour and attack on the established corrupt priesthood of Hindu society, as the prime movers of the Maratha rising. He saw religion as the driving force of history and likened the Bhakti schools of that period to the European Reformation against Catholicism and the consequent rise of the new States and society in Europe. Of course, the process had to be assisted in India by the genius of a leader like Shivaji. Rajwade and others had religion as the driving force, but differed as to the personalities (Ramdas or Shivaji, etc) who were the exponents or representatives of this rebirth of a nation. The peculiar genius of the Marathas, embodied in what he called Maharashtra *Dharma*, was also made one of the forces of history. When it came to finding reasons for defeat at the hands of the British, curiously the retreat of religion was not made the main cause of the fall. Possibly because the English did not hold that conversion to Christianity and the blessings of their God as the force that put them on the waves and dropped India in their laps. Kelkar found the reasons to be mainly in the absence of that cohesive element called national patriotism and in the extreme love of individualist separatism that characterised the Marathas. The English were the opposite of this and hence they won. Why the virtues appeared among the British in the 17th and 18th centuries, which apparently they had not before as their own history tells us, nobody tried to explain. Basu's imposing tome attributed the successes of the British to their total lack of



truthfulness and extensive use of treachery and corruption, which the Indian rulers unfortunately could not combat. Thus the whole movement of history was conditioned by men's ideas, the virtues and vices of statesmen and leaders. The millions of the toiling people, the march of their social organisations through ages—all were subject to the whims and prejudices, moral ideas or religious faith of the 'heroes', *Gurus*, *Avatars* of history. Some found its motive powers in rare individuals, some in the inherent characteristics of this or that caste or race.

But how on earth these ideas, values, morals or faiths arose, grew and vanished and were born again, and why the same set of ideas in one country defeated the same set in another, was left to chance, accident, fate. So, ultimately, society was left with no hope of planning and controlling its own present or future!

Our historians who followed this strain were only imitating their own foreign teachers on whose products of learning they were brought up. They were disciples of Carlyle, Burke, Bentham, Green and Hegel. The idealist, fatalist views of history, which these philosophers of the bourgeoisie applied to their own country's history, were picked up by our historians and applied to ours in those very forms. And these learned men of India were not averse to accepting the bourgeois science of history from the schools of their very conquerors inasmuch as society in India itself was now being pulverised and refashioned in the image of the bourgeoisie of the conquering imperialist countries.

As we mentioned above, the churning of the immediate pre-British period did yield a political and social platform to the rising bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia. Those who would blame everything on the masses, held the cure of their superstitions and narrow caste feelings as the prime conditions for the regeneration of the country. Those who held feudal separatism as the cause of the defeat, called for a united national patriotism, transcending the boundaries of feudal family pride and interests. As the masses were but inert clay, moulded and enlivened by the ideas and example of the 'hero', the 'leader' or the '*Avatar*,' in history they had no other role except to trust, obey and follow.

Even factional caste quarrels were justified from history. The Non-Brahmin Party pleaded that the victorious Marathas lost



when led by the Brahmins, the Peshwas. Hence any political leadership where the Brahmins had a hand was suspect. The Kayasthas fought Brahmins, who quoted past history against them in which even Sanskrit philology was used as a weapon. The scheduled-castes formulated their platform, beginning with their role in the Koregaon battle<sup>6</sup> and ending with the denunciation of the *Manusmriti*, the social-political code of Hindu feudal order.

Past history was thus being read in order to help and justify the present slogans and platform of political parties. Lessons from the past victories and defeats were supposed to help the present. This shows how history was being read with a purpose and with a definite partisan attitude by the bourgeois intelligentsia, in which the millions of the masses had no role except to toil and fight for this or that hero.

But soon our bourgeois philosophers of past history and bourgeois leadership of contemporary history found that they could not help each other much. The political and social realities, the upheavals of this period, were something *totally new in history*, which past experience could not explain. Babar and Akbar, Shivaji and Peshwas, the saints and *sadhus* of those days of 16th and 17th centuries, their politics and society, had nothing in common with Victoria and Palmerstone, Churchill and the YMCA, Tilak and Gandhi, or Marx, Lenin and Stalin of 19th and 20th centuries. Where was history then to help its makers in face of the steam engine and telegraph, the world market and crisis, strikes and revolution? True, courageous professors were not wanting who tried to discover banking and rate of interest even in the *Rigveda*, parliamentary voting in Buddha-Viharas, cartels and combines in Chanakya, and so on. But social-political reality laughed at these attempts. The colossal all-world-embracing capitalist industrial revolution of our epoch was a thing nowhere heard of in history. The careering of the bourgeoisie throughout the world for conquest of markets and raw materials, for investment and super-profits, had made the world for the first time a single entity. Modern imperialism and its conquests were entirely different from those of Alexander,

<sup>6</sup> Where the Peshwas fought the British and lost. The Mahar Battalions of the British were a great force in this battle and to them is attributed the British victory in that battle.



Babar, Chengiz Khan and the Marathas. So also the toiling masses of ancient and medieval history could not have dreamt of the mighty doings of the world proletariat of our epoch, out to become the ruling class and transform world society out of poverty to plenty for all time to come! Entirely new forces, new classes, new people, sprang into existence, to guide whom, to understand whom, the science of history of the bourgeois historians, Indian and foreign, could provide no laws. Political history as studied by the old authors ceased to be a living guiding subject in the national-political struggles after the crisis of the first world war, when India was drawn into the orbit of world revolution and its toiling masses lifted the banner of the democratic revolution.

An outstanding work on Indian history has scarcely been produced in the last twenty years, compared to what was poured out in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Instead of a bold, scientific and revolutionary understanding of history, blind people thought that they had acquired a vision, when merely confused, vacillating *Glimpses of History* were given to them and sighs about *Glory that was Ind.*

Not that work on history had altogether ceased. There were historians and historical institutions engaged in the task of collecting material, on research and interpretation. But the driving force had ceased to be the necessity to find inspiration and platform for the struggle against imperialism from the past. The national movement led by the bourgeoisie had evolved its political platform of 'constitutional demands' and its economic platform of freedom to develop 'national industry' in partnership with that very imperialism. In this field, Irish, American and English historians were more to its use than the edicts of Asoka, Akbar or the Peshwa Daftar. The poor research scholars, deprived of Government support or the patronage of their own bourgeoisie, managed to scrape out a living somehow.

But if political history waned in its influence, the new situation, developing out of the crisis of imperialism and bourgeois nationalism, called for another orientation in historical studies. It was now *social history*, raising the question of relation of classes in social economy and politics, the question



of the entire movement for social revolution, that called forth the attention of the bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia.<sup>7</sup>

Political history confronting imperialism had done its task, that of evolving a common national slogan, which was easy enough to work out with the idealist tools furnished by the English and continental philosophers of history. India was an ancient land which had her own economy, a rich one, had her heroes and kings, her States, her battles, her constitutions through centuries. She should have them again.

India was trying to build her new industries and agriculture, her new culture and nationhood. The imperial ruling class must not hamper her. But it did, so it must be fought in the new way.

The new way was the unity of all the people in the land facing the common enemy, the British invader. None could prosper unless the foreign imperialist rule was overthrown. Every person, every interest in the land, had reason to be anti-British and therefore it must go. All interests, all people, therefore, had to have one aim and one slogan: that of national freedom to overthrow the imperialists. Given that, all people—workers, peasants, middle class, the capitalists, landlords, every living soul in the land—would be happy and free under our own democracy.

But in order to achieve freedom from an implacable foe there have to be forces who would hurl themselves into battle, stake their lives and all. Where were such forces?

The intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie, argued that every Indian, irrespective of his religion, his caste, his sex, his class, his avocation, must be and is anti-imperialist and freedom-loving and hence ready for sacrifice. That is, in principle, every inhabitant of this country was a revolutionary force, since foreign imperialism harmed everybody.

The toiling masses of India accepted for a time this argument,

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Works on Race and Caste in India, Origin of State, History of Marriage, Education in Ancient India, Banking, Law and Revenue, Social Organisation in Mahabharata Times, Ancient Trade and Manufactures, Cultural Relations between the Arabs and the Hindus*, etc. by several authors such as Ghurye, Dutta, Beniprasad, Rajwade, Bhargava, Altekar, Ghosal, Vaidya, Fick, and so on.



of nationhood that transcends all class interests or caste interests or any narrow selfish interest.

But obviously it was a false picture of nationhood and of the freedom movement.

All classes and all interests were not revolutionary; in fact there were some who stood to lose by gaining national freedom and hence, in spite of being Indian, they had no interest to be anti-imperialist. There were interests who vomited fire against the British invader but as soon as the workers or peasants demanded that as Indians, as good as the factory owner or even better, they had a right to decent living for the labour they gave and the wealth they created, the erstwhile patriots ran to the British bayonets for 'law and order'. Where was their patriotism then and where lay their interest—in guarding their profits or in national freedom?

Historical experience, real life, slowly taught the working millions that the social organism called nation was not a harmonious one, with one brotherhood and one interest. It was full of internal antagonisms and contradictions.

What were these contradictions based upon, from what source did they spring from—religion, caste, education? No. They were none of that type. These were new contradictions, based on class divisions. Society was made up of classes whose physiognomy was determined by their role in the process of production and distribution of wealth on which the whole nation existed. Some of these classes gained by allying with imperialism, viz., the landlords, who were created by the British conquest. There were classes who gained by opposing imperialism, viz., the bourgeoisie, because imperialism obstructed its growth and full exploitation of the toiling masses. There were classes who gained by opposing both the British and Indian bourgeoisie, because they were under a double yoke. They could not really be free unless all exploitation was abolished. Thus the workers and peasants were the only revolutionary classes. The working class in large industries of the town had begun to realise this. And the national bourgeoisie, interested only in seizing all the profits of labour for itself and to grow as big as the British, who stunted its growth, was afraid of this new rising class.

The working class in the front of national freedom, therefore,



demanding a concrete picture of freedom, its rights of existence and its all round freedom, and demanded to know why certain classes allied with the foreigner in economic exploitation of the toilers of their own land and even secured foreign bayonets to suppress the exploited. Was not the national bourgeoisie only bargaining for its share of profits when standing in the front of national freedom and hampering its revolutionary growth? Was the national struggle then an aspect of class struggle? Is national revolution then a process of class struggle? Have all national-political struggles a class basis? The working class demanded an answer from the bourgeois intelligentsia, and from its own leadership that, was newly arising in its midst—that of the Communists.

On the continent of Europe where the bourgeoisie and the people had national freedom, the same question was raised in different forms. When feudal lords and kings were overthrown, autocracy destroyed, vast powers of production developed and unheard of wealth rolled off the machines, and democracy voted and decided who was to rule the State, how was it that crisis of unemployment visited people, famine in the midst of plenty overtook the toilers and whole society, except the rich? What was the way out? There, then, new historians, philosophers of history, arose, who found the answer for the working class. They went to the root of the matter and asked: how does human society arise and grow from epoch to epoch? What is the driving force of its rise and growth, of its evolutions and revolutions? Bourgeois science had failed to give the answer. It had already said that the problem of the poor and rich, of the ruler and ruled, of the strong and weak, of the leader and led, the hero and the followers, existed from eternity and will always exist. It was man's fate, the original sin of Creation, or God's will.

The working class refused to accept that conclusion. Marx and Engels analysed the history of social growth and found the laws that govern development of history; the famous laws of historical materialism, the dialectical and materialist understanding of history.

According to this theory, the development of society, the condition in which men find themselves or make for themselves, does not arise out of the good or bad ideas of this or that man, hero or *Avatar*, nor natural geographical surroundings, nor from



God's will. History is neither a predestined mechanistic movement, nor does it move in a circle like the water-wheel, which fills in and drains out at the hands of the ever-toiling historical Ass—called Man. Man evolved out of material Nature and in order to live has to fight with it, has first to fight for food, shelter, clothing, etc., etc. That is the primary activity. Therein his condition is determined by the productive forces, the tools, the instruments of production that he develops. Man arises as social man, and his social structure, *i.e.*, his relations with one another, is basically conditioned by the productive forces. These relations are production relations and the given society in the given epoch is recognised by its mode of production and is demarcated from others by that characteristic. That determines the political structure, morals, philosophy, emotions, art, etc. of the society. All these have their origin in that foundation called the mode of production of a society. But that does not mean that they by themselves, once arisen, do not affect the base or do not have an independent role and value. They do. They help to change, modify, alter the structure of society, but on condition that the base, *i.e.*, the productive forces, has ripened for the change.

'Five main types of relations of production are known to history: Primitive Communal, Slave, Feudal, Capitalist and Socialist.'<sup>8</sup> From each to the next, man has progressed to a higher phase of living and thinking. From each to the other, man had to progress through revolution and struggle. In the first phase, society was not divided in classes, had no private property, had no class struggles, no rich and poor, no State, no kings, no internal civil war but had enough of tribal wars. As instruments of production grew, private property and classes arose. Since then all history is history of class struggles, leading to slave society, feudal society, capitalist society and, finally, socialist society wherein classes are finally abolished on the basis of the highest development of productive forces and social wealth. Then history ceases to be blind class struggle and man becomes complete master of his destiny. The modern instruments of production make that possible and inevitable.

The struggle for the final phase began in the late 19th century,

<sup>8</sup> *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*, Moscow, 1945, p. 123.



and the class that by its role in production will accomplish this historical task is the working class.

Marxism destroyed the concept of history as a jumble of accidents, of ideas, and reduced it to science, a verifiable law, giving man a consciousness to plan existence and the future, abolish fate and misery.

According to this theory, where forces were ripe the European working class carried out the revolution in several countries, established the Soviet Union and Socialism, leading the way for toiling humanity.

According to this theory, the conquest of India and such other conquests by the European, American or other nations in the present epoch are conquests in behalf of the interests of the bourgeoisie of these countries, their necessity for markets, for export of capital, for new fields of exploitation. Small capital by fattening on labour, by ruining its own class brothers in competition on the market, concentrates itself, centralises technique, grows gigantic into world-wide monopolies and conquers colonies. Capitalist conquest of a colony generates there again the same relations, if it is not already a capitalist country; generates there a national bourgeoisie, which confronts the monopoly imperialist conqueror with competition and claims for a 'living space in the world of profit.' Along with it is also born the working class, the bearer of the revolution. That gives birth to the national struggle. But as soon as the working class and the toiling masses claim their right to live, the national bourgeoisie deserts the people, goes over to the camp of imperialism, strikes a deal with it and turns against its own people, *i.e.*, suppresses their revolts to grow out of slavery, into real freedom from exploitation, into Socialism.

When the working class of a country has grown to the consciousness of its historical role and begins to organise with its new ideology, the bourgeoisie, besides suppressing it with violence, tries to corrupt it with its own ideology in every possible way. One of those ways is to teach the worker *wrong history*, to give him a picture of history as will tie him to the tail of the bourgeoisie and make him believe and defend the bourgeois social order as the best one, as the inevitable one, as the permanent, eternal, God-given, most moral and happy one. The bourgeoisie presents the Communist conception of history and



future society as utopian, unreal, immoral, unnatural, anti-human-nature and ruinous. In order to do this, the bourgeois intelligentsia dives again into history, hypnotises the rising worker with the idealist, metaphysical picture of social growth and denies the dialectical materialist picture of social growth.

That is what the bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia started to do with Indian history when after 1920-30 the Indian working class appeared in the arena of social-political struggles with its own banner, its own slogans, its own party and programme as against that of the national bourgeoisie, and raised the question as to who really made the nation and for whom really was freedom and democracy meant.

One of the ideological arguments the bourgeoisie used against the rising Communist movement in India was that whatever the case in Europe and other countries, India and its culture, its people and history were peculiar in themselves, that they did not answer to any of the laws of Marxism-Leninism.

And they dived into the story of the *Vedas*, *Smritis*, *Upanishads*, *Epics* and *Puranas*, and as evidence of their theory held forth for view the powerful systems of castes, the saintly kings on thrones and kingly saints in forests, all surviving through thousands of years, as nowhere else, and turned round and asked the Communists : where are all these according to your law of historical materialism? India had no primitive communism, no collective property and matriarchy, no communes, she has no history of their break-up and the rise of private property and the State, classes and class wars, slavery and feudalism, as you call them, taking their turn in her history. Yes, we have capitalism, now, the cursed gift of the English and their machine, but our capitalism has its distinctly Indian virtue. Hence we need not inevitably go over to Socialism through class struggles and revolution. We shall have a new product of our own, Gandhian Socialism, and belie your law of Communism, of your historical materialism, in the future, as the special destiny of India belied it in the past.

It is with this purpose that now history is being studied and written, the social-political history of India, to deny class struggle, to make the exploited classes bear with their exploitation and poverty with the solace of class peace, collaboration and spiritual uplift.



The bourgeoisie of Europe and America tried hard to suppress the Marxian view of history, first by simply calling it false; but having failed there they tried to misrepresent and corrupt it. The continually recurring crises of the bourgeois social order forced its intelligentsia to recognise the dominance of social-economic activity in the life of man and society; and the absence of crises in the Soviet Union, and its effect on people's mind throughout the world, forced the bourgeoisie to accept class struggles and Socialism as part of their philosophy of history also. But they accept it in order to corrupt it and thus defeat it. They admit that class struggle exists, that Socialism is better than capitalism, but they deny that the logical outcome of class struggle is to fight and overthrow the bourgeoisie, establish the working class as the ruling class, *i.e.*, the dictatorship of the proletariat against the exploiting classes and fullest democracy for the toiling people, which alone can put the instruments of production, land and factories in the hands of society, and build up Socialism and a classless society of peace and plenty.

They deny these political and economic conclusions of class struggle, the inevitable conclusions of the dialectics of history. They now admit the aims of the working class in order to worm into the bosom of that class and disarm it in practice, in strategy and tactics, so as to protect their class rule from its attack. They turn to Indian history and say: with us historical changes have always been done by spiritual conviction, by peace, by classes agreeing to shed their vices and greed. The Indian is not like the Russian or the French or any other whose experience of struggle towards Socialism and democracy you may like to quote. Hence the consistent development of the class struggle to the point of establishing the proletarian State and proletarian democracy is not necessary for Indian conditions. And in order to prove this they approach the worker and the peasant with bright happy stories of the Hindu and Muslim past and exploit his present ignorance and ideology to cheat him of his future.

Thus history once again is used by the ruling class in the post-British period for its selfish, narrow class interest, for partisan ends.

In the early period the bourgeoisie used history for its class interests against the British in the name of the nation and appeared as the champion of all the people and their interests.



Threatened by the rising working-class movement with the exposure of its betrayal of the people's interests to win its selfish class interests, it is using history again to defend itself against the social revolution and disarm it ideologically by a false theory of social development.

We are not concerned just now with the discussion of the political events of contemporary history in India and their evaluation. We are showing how with the changing political and social situation, history is being made to serve reaction instead of social progress which is its true role. Through history man has risen from savagery to civilisation and it is the task of the philosophy of history to discover the law which governed this social growth of man through ages, so that he may rise still higher and build for himself a better world. India is now in an epoch where its working class is faced with a serious responsibility towards Indian and world society. To discharge that responsibility, the working class must sharply break away from the bourgeois view of history, before that view has gripped the people to their roots.

As yet there has neither been a serious presentation of Indian history from the point of view of historical materialism, nor a serious refutation of such a view. That the Marxists have their own views on Indian history and explain it in terms of historical materialism, in terms of class struggles and so on, is generally known. But that is not due to any studied work on Indian history as such by any Marxist but is due to the dissemination of the views of Marxism in general and some works on the modern developments in Indian history.

With the bourgeoisie in power, the threat of new adulteration of Indian history has grown serious. In the last few years bourgeois scholars have indirectly tried to barbwire history from any materialist attacks, but unfortunately for them, the very ancientness of India, the persistence of its social organism, its undying village communities, their memory and records have proved the undoing of these historians. Nowhere in the world is there such a rich oral record of changes and revolutions in social organisation as amongst the Hindus. (For convenience of treatment and understanding, I take ancient history of India as the history of the Hindus.) The record is so frank, some-



times so cruelly frank, that the Hindu leadership of the Indian bourgeoisie is forced to deny its truthfulness, declare it as fiction, or wriggle out of it somehow. Innumerable practices, incidents, examples, traditions and laws recorded in the religious-social literature of Hindu society, baffle the bourgeois historian for explanation. The laws of marriage, the origin of respected heroes and holy heads from what appear to be 'queer marriages,' the laws of property, of inheritance, of common rights of property, the behaviour of kings, theory of origin of the State, property and family as given in 'holy books' of the Hindus, baffle the bourgeois historian—so much so that a vast number of them are denied as fiction or allegory. Faced with social facts (not only myths) which do not square up with bourgeois notions of what ought to be, several scholars denounced the whole *Mahabharat* to be a fiction or at best an allegory. It is my firm opinion that the vast store house of Hindu mythology and religious social laws and practices, if read and sifted on the basis of historical materialism, would yield a consistent and rational picture of India's ancient history, though it will not be to the liking of the Hindu orthodoxy or bourgeois philosophy. It will then appear that the law of historical materialism, the law that productive forces and production relations determine man's history through the ages, is valid for India too, for the past, the present and the future.

The most difficult period for treatment and understanding is that of primitive communism and its break-up, followed by the rise of private property, classes and class struggles, the origin of family and State, stepping into the period of slavery. The transition of this condition to that of Asiatic feudalism on the basis of that famous oriental village community and castes, is comparatively easy to unravel. A very deep understanding of historical materialism and very wide research work by Marxist scholars is essential before a comprehensive picture of these periods can be presented. Very painstaking studies of this early period as depicted in the religious books of the Hindus have been carried out by bourgeois scholars, who have tried to apply what they call 'the sociological point of view' to rites and myths in order to give us an idea of the social organism of the period. But just as they failed in Europe in the case of the Greeks, the Romans and the Teutons, until Marx and Engels took hold



of the material and put history on its feet, so have they failed in India also.

Even these attempts at a sociological peep into the ancient records have been hampered by Hindu orthodoxy and the Indian bourgeoisie (whether Hindu or Muslim), because certain social facts militate against their present conceptions of morality and ethics and hence they object to their being mentioned as part of past history. They cannot bear the 'shame' that such things existed once in history. When the famous historian Rajwade began to write his great work on the development of family and marriage among the Hindus, by utilising the *Vedic*, *Bharat* and *Purana* texts and the researches of European writers amongst the aboriginal tribes alive today, the Hindu Marathi press in Maharashtra and Hindu orthodoxy raised a howl against the publisher and the writer. The work was never completed, and a year after, the author died. He was neither a Marxist nor a materialist nor an impious man. He was a very orthodox Hindu himself but he put historical facts and opinions above everything else, even the infallibility of God.<sup>9</sup> The understanding of the *Vedic* texts remains incomplete, unless the ritual words are illustrated with the ritual actions, which the Brahmins alone know by tradition; and that too a very few of them, who are fast dying out. It is a difficult task to persuade those with resources to bring the material together.

Under such conditions, just at present it is not possible to attempt a full-fledged presentation of Indian history by the dialectical materialist method. But certain broad outlines can be sketched. Enough material to do that is available in extant publications.

In this volume, I am taking up the period of primitive communism, its break-up and the rise of private property, classes, slavery and State amongst the Aryans.

<sup>9</sup> The story of the theft of Jayaswal's famous manuscript on the ancient Indian *Gana-Sanghas* and republics, the sabotage in its publication, is well known to the students of history.



## CHAPTER I

### WHERE ARYAN MAN BEGINS

WHEN we speak of Indian history today, we first think of a country with definite boundaries, called India, and all the people residing therein, whatever their religion, caste, profession or philosophy. The traditional boundaries of India and her people as we came to recognise them when they confronted the British ruling class do not exist today since the partition into Pakistan and Hindustan. Even then history of India still conveys the same idea—India bounded by the three mountains, north, east and west and the Indian ocean lower down in east, west and south. History of modern India traditionally begins with the Battle of Plassey of the British period. Before that, or side by side, they speak of the Marathas. Before that the Mughals and Muslim invasions, generally from 1,000 A.D. In all these periods, we include in the concept of India nearly all of the geographical areas which belong to it today. Yet a central power, governing almost the whole country, had never materialised till the Mughal and Maratha States of the 18th century, when people really could speak of one Hindustan. The English, with their political structure and capitalist economy, completed that conception and feeling into a reality, though a very limited reality, full of other contradictions, of which we need not speak here.

This picture of one India, geographically and politically, becomes almost non-existent as we penetrate deeper into the ancient period, until we come to a point where we have to speak of only a number of peoples and not a country at all. That is the point where we have to speak of primitive history, when men living in *Ganas* and tribes, roaming from place to place, even while laying claim to certain



territory and many a time not laying any claim at all, live as ethnic groups and are not recognised as citizens or inhabitants of such and such a country. The history of the Greeks and Romans is first a history of Italy and Greece as we understand it today. But the early history of India as known today is a history mainly of the Aryan tribes and people, whose story later on becomes the history of India as a country.

All historians, with one or two exceptions, agree in holding that the Aryans came to India from a common home, somewhere outside India. Branches of the Aryan race went west towards Europe, Asia Minor, etc. and some came to India, through the Himalayas via the Punjab and Kashmir.

Where was the common home? Some hold that it was somewhere near the North Pole in modern Siberia (Tilak), some say it was on the Volga, somewhere near the Caspian Sea, which they identify in the Kashyapa Muni of Aryan mythology. Some do not accept this theory of a common home at all. But the evidence in the most ancient basic words of various Aryan groups of languages in Europe and Asia, the similarity of the early myths, which are basically records of early common life and thinking, support the theory of a common home from where the Aryans spread.

Why did they have to spread? Some hold that it was due to a natural disaster, such as deluge, which finds mention in the myths of the early Jews, Christians, Greeks, Romans and Hindu Aryans. Apart from the deluge, the very necessity of social growth—growing nomads in search of food and pastures, warring tribes pushing each other out—was also the cause of the spread out.

When did this take place? Anywhere between 6,000 to 4,000 B.C., according to some scholars. There is a lot of difference of opinion on these dates. We should like to be precise but with present knowledge we cannot be.

Moreover, the unknown period of primitive history or pre-history is so vast that one can only approximate in terms of a thousand years or more, not less. We cannot discuss them like the date of Shivaji's birth or the Battle of Stalingrad.

Anthropologists tell us that man evolved from the proto-man-animal some five hundred thousand years ago. They are



working out the evolution from the most ancient skeletons and bones found in various places. The animal, living perhaps in tropical jungles, was forced to leave them by natural calamity or changes. Once on the ground, in order to survive, necessity drove his body to stand erect on the hind feet and free the front feet as hands for defence and for work, to snatch food, etc. With the hand he tried to make tools. With the erect posture, the hand fashioning itself to make tools, and tools increasing his capacity to survive and grow, he increased his brain capacity, evolved speech and thus the proto-man-animal, who was something like, but not the chimpanzee or gorilla, grew into the full-fledged man who now peoples the earth. The earliest types are dead and gone and we have only their bones here and there to help anthropologists to reconstruct the evolution.

Between that time and the emergence of the Aryans in history, thousands of years elapsed. So far we have no material to write that story.

The Aryans that we find described in the records of the Hindus are, no doubt, in the stage of savagery, and we shall see later what it means. But they had far advanced from the man of earliest savagery. Yet some memories of that stage are hinted at in the myths which recall that period.

The Aryans whom we are going to study here are those who are battling in Central Asia, expanding and advancing towards India and who ultimately seize it and colonise it. We shall try to unravel their progress from savagery to civilisation.

One question which arises at this stage may be disposed of here, before we proceed to deal with the Aryan entry.

Was India peopled by any other race or groups before the Aryans came and what was their civilisation, and if the Aryans fought them, what happened to the defeated? That means: is there any pre-Aryan history of India?

Yes, there is a pre-Aryan epoch of Indian history. But no independent records are available. Most of what is known about the pre-Aryans is gleaned from what the Aryans said about their predecessors and opponents. The excavations at Harappa in the Punjab and Mohenjo Daro in Sind are said to be remnants of the pre-Aryan civilisation of India. But so



far their record has not been deciphered enough to give us what we can call a historical account.

It is held by some that India before the Aryans was inhabited by a people whom they name as Dravidians, who were more advanced than the Aryans in their material means of production and seem to have given a tough battle; but were ultimately defeated and driven south and east. Some of the defeated Dravidians were enslaved and some assimilated otherwise. The Dravidians retained the basic structure of their language. The Andhras, Tamils, Malayalis, Todas, Kannadigas are held to be the successors of the early Dravidians, who, during subsequent history, did not fail to put a stamp of their own also on Aryan culture. We will not deal with this question, however, in this volume.

It may also be mentioned here that there is one more school which thinks that even before the Dravidians, there was another stock of people in India, the pre-Dravidian. Either they lived side by side with Dravidians or were defeated by the latter and thrown out. Who are the remnants of this stock? They are supposed to be the Mon-Khmer group of people now in Central Provinces and Bengal areas, their descendants being the Mundas, Nagas, Santals, etc. Being pushed out they went eastwards. They are what anthropologists call the pre-historic Polynesian group, which spread out to Malaya, Indonesia, Indo-China and even Australia. The most primitive tribes in these areas are those of the Mon-Khmer group which was pre-Aryan and pre-Dravidian with whom also the Aryans had to fight for the land.<sup>1</sup>

Now we shall turn to the Aryans as they are presented to us in their homelands, growing in their *Ganas*, migrating and advancing both geographically and culturally. What we shall be seeing of them now will be based on what the Aryan records themselves tell us; only we shall be looking at them, not exactly as they did with their imagery, but with our outlook of social science.

<sup>1</sup> The first comprehensive discussion of the Dravidian is found in Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Language*, 1856. On 'Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian', see collection of essays under the same title translated by Dr. P. C. Bagchi, Calcutta University, 1929. Contains essays by Jules Bloch, Sylvan Levi and Przyluski. Also consult the *Gatha Saptasati*.



Since we shall be delving into their history through their records, it is necessary to have some idea about them at this stage.

The records of the Aryans are peculiar to themselves. There is no such written records in the history of any primitive people on the earth, who rose from primitivism to civilisation, survived to this day and carried their ancient social memory so well, except perhaps the Greeks to an extent. Egyptian history is read in the hieroglyphs of the Pyramids, the graves of their kings and in the papyri scrolls. Sumerian and Assyrian, and through them that of the Hittites, is read through their famous cuneiform mud tablets dug up in the Middle East. Greece can be approached through Homer, reaching up to 1,000 B.C. or so, and the recent excavations of the Ionian and other remains.

The Indo-Aryan fixed his memory of the earliest social life in the *Vedic* verses or the *Ricas* and all the literature following from them. The *Vedic* record is followed by the Epics and then comes a comparatively modern period of *Sutras* and *Smritis*, etc. For at least four thousand years, these *Vedic Mantras*, accompanied by their definite accents, timings and actions, have been carried from mouth to mouth by the Brahmins of Hindu Aryan society, until they were fixed down on paper, commented upon and preserved from extinction. No doubt they were preserved, learnt and handed down from generation to generation, not for the benefit of mankind or history. By 1,500 B.C. or so they had become exclusively a religious ritual for the whole of Hindu society and source of living to the Brahmin priesthood at that stage in their history. Hence their perseverance through ages, even after they had ceased to reflect social reality. What is, however, characteristic is not that the ritual was preserved but that the Hindu Aryan in India had the fortune to live for over two thousand years, with almost an unbroken continuity of his basic social organisation, whatever the changes at the top. He survived through several invasions and onslaughts until the millions of the Hindus, and all those mixed up with them or submerged in them through history, were handed over to the modern age of capitalism, the industrial revolution, to be dug up, shaken up and altered completely out of their former existence. The



social revolution that they are experiencing now is nothing like what they had seen before. Hence, their social-religious ritual and memory which could survive the former revolutions is no longer in a position to survive and pass on as before. Hence their extinction in the former form is inevitable. The historian has now to record them in print and paper. The society, the castes, the voices and interests that carried them on the tongue, are vanishing for ever to be transformed into a higher and richer existence of the new Socialist society. History has denied that role to those pre-historic contemporaries of the Indo-Aryans, who parted company on the Volga some thousands of years ago.

The literature, on the basis of which we shall be looking into the pre-historic or primitive commune period, are the four *Vedas* and the Epic of *Mahabharata*, and mainly the former.

The four *Vedas*, namely the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*, are one in their essence, i.e., in the subject matter and even form. In fact, according to the earliest traditions, the *Vedas* are only three, *Rik*, *Yajur*, *Sama*. The fourth had been admitted in the holy trinity at a later period. The *Samaveda*, though separately mentioned, is nothing but the copy of the *Rigveda*, set to tune and rhythm, which should govern the singing and actions under the *Rigveda*. It is, so to say, the musical score of the *Rik*.

In the ritual, that is, the performance of what is known as *Yajna* or sacrifice, these *Vedic* verses had a function. According to the Brahminical tradition, each *Veda* was sung by a particular functionary in the *Yajna*. For the historian, the important point is not who sung which verse and what he did at the particular ceremony while singing it. The important point is what was the function of the man, saying it when it had not become a ritual, in the whole *Yajna* process. Whatever the verse, was there any socially useful act that he was supposed to perform in the process? The *Yajna* ritual, as it is known to the Brahmins of whom today there may not be more than a dozen in the whole of India, is a process in which almost all primitive social life has to be recreated. You have to produce fire by friction of two pieces of wood, to build a cottage where no iron is used but only specific wood and grass, to milk cows, make curds, pound corn with stone (not even a stone mill), kill and



skin animals, and boil and cook them, sing and dance, make love in the primitive way, fight and win, pray, and so on. If one studies the *Yajna* ritual, one comes to the conclusion that *it is, in ritual form, the reproduction of primitive Aryan life.* Telling to do all this, reciting the stories of the origin of the world, man and animal, singing beautiful descriptions of the dawn, the praises of the great wealth given to the people by the leaders (the *Danam*), shouting to cure disease and frighten the evil spirits, and so on, is the subject matter of these *Vedic* verses, or *Veda Suktas* as they are known. All scholars admit that the *Yajna* or *Vedic* ritual, in essence, reflects real Aryan life at a certain stage in history.

The forms, in which they are available to us today, are what may be described as editions and collections by various schools of Brahminical ritual. The collection of *Rigveda* is available only in one edition, or *Samhita* as it is called, consisting of 1,028 *Suktas*. The *Yajurveda* has six *Samhitas*, four of them comprise what is known as *Krishna Yajurveda* or black *Yajurveda*, two make up the white or *Sukla Yajurveda*. The *Samaveda* is only a reproduction of the *Rik* with 1,549 verses. The *Atharvaveda* has 6,000 verses or 731 *Suktas*. (A *Sukta* is like a sonnet with several verses or *Ricas* in it.) Nearly one-seventh part of this *Veda* is reproduction of the *Rik*.

The verses in these four *Vedas* are the most ancient in age, compared to what other material is available to us in other literature. Even amongst them some are older than others. At a certain stage in Aryan development, new *Ricas* or *Vedic* verses ceased 'to appear' or be created. What was there got fixed into the sacred inheritance of those who had them. What really this means in social history we will see later on.

But each *Veda* with these most archaic verses has a *Brahmana*\* attached to it. Each *Brahmana* has an *Aranyaka* and each *Aranyaka* has an *Upanishada*. There being several *Samhitas* or branches of the *Veda*, there are several *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishadas*. The subject matter of the *Brahmana* and *Aranyaka* is tradition, stories, mysterious questions and mysterious answers. The *Brahmanas* are written in prose and are the source of a great deal of material throwing light on



the ancient social organisation and struggles. The *Upanishadas* are discourses on philosophy, now well known to all readers of Hindu history and philosophy. The *Upanishadas* are comparatively 'modern' additions to the *Vedas* and are not really considered as part of them, though they are classified under this or that *Veda*. Each *Samhita* of the *Veda* had also its *Sutras* which are of various categories, viz., *Shrauta*, *Grihya*, *Dharma*, *Shulva*.\* When we come to these, we are already far away from the original *Veda* and its society. Because therein we come to laws and punishments, family rituals, property and all matters pertaining to a society which has ceased to be tribal.

We get hold of this literature, ritual, traditions, stories, etc., etc., put together all the *Yajna*\* actions which are basic and most ancient, and from them reconstruct the primitive Aryan society. This work has been attempted before by several great scholars of *Vedic* literature.<sup>2</sup> They have collected all the necessary social data and put it down on record. But they missed the essence and hence could not hold before us a picture of the ancient Aryan commune. In fact, because those scholars lacked the theory of historical materialism, and only used the bourgeois sociological method of the 19th century historians, they got into a muddle where they should not, but, because they had a social approach and not the religious ritualist, they could sift the useful material facts for our study. It is mainly from these facts that we can easily understand the development of the Aryan commune, if we get the key to understand it. The key to the understanding of what looks like senseless ritual and sometimes meaningless stories in the *Vedic* texts including the *Brahmanas*, especially, and also the historical material of the *Mahabharata*, is to understand what the *Yajna* was. Social memory, tradition, religious ritual—all hold the twin, *Brahman* and *Yajna*, to be the beginning of all world, the end and be all of existence in Aryan conception. If we note that and understand the *Yajna* and its relation to *Brahman* and man, with the help of the *Vedas*, *Brahmanas* and the

\* श्रौत, गृह्य, धर्म, शुल्ब.

† यज्ञ-कर्म

<sup>2</sup> We need not catalogue them here. They will be referred to in the subsequent discussion.



*Mahabharata*, we shall have found the primitive Aryan in his true form. And then from what to us looks a totally meaningless rattle about *Brahman* and *Yajna* in the *Vedas*, we will be able to glean some historical data. Let us, therefore, analyse and reconstruct the *Yajna*, and the origin of the Aryan man as given by his *Yajna* record and the great *Brahman* in whom he lives.



## CHAPTER II

### PREHISTORIC STAGES OF CULTURE

ANY textbook of history, telling us about the culture and civilisation of man, the way he lives, thinks and produces things necessary for his life, always tells about the instruments used by him in the given stage to produce his necessities. This is an almost unanimously observed 'practice' with all anthropologists and social historians, especially when dealing with ancient societies. They tell us whether man used hunting and fishing weapons, or whether he had a plough and carried on agriculture. They even classify social history according to the instruments of production, such as man's Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, etc.<sup>1</sup> Whatever their theories of history, they cannot escape the fact that in the life of social man, the instrument of production is the thing that is the key to his life. But beyond this the bourgeois historian will not go.

The Marxist holds the productive forces at the disposal of society in a given epoch as the determining factor. Before man can think and do any other activity, he must do the prime activity of struggling with Nature in order to live, *i.e.*, to produce food, housing, clothing, etc. The instruments that he can fashion for this, the number of people that can collect together and hold together for this and their skill are the total productive forces of that society. The given geographical and natural environment then can become an additional helpful factor, not otherwise.

On the basis of these productive forces and according to their nature the social organism is built. How men shall organise their relations with each other and to the instruments of production, *i.e.*, production relations, will depend on the

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1954, p. 180, footnote.



productive forces. Hunters of the primitive age with the stone axe cannot have capitalist relations or society, nor can wage-earners and capitalists with the steam engine have the primitive commune relations.

In the change-over from one stage to another, the revolutionary factor is the instruments of production. The peculiarity of the instruments of production is that they are never static and are constantly changing, undergoing change due to man's social productive activity and the needs of human society.

The changes in the instruments of production, the productive forces, are the key to the revolutionary changes in the structure of society.

The chief characteristics and stages of the development of man from the stage of savagery to barbarism and thence to civilisation, can best be presented in the outline which Engels gives us. On the background of this outline, we shall be better able to follow the Aryan in his history.

#### SAVAGERY

1. *Lower Stage.*—Infancy of the human race. Man still lived in his original habitat, tropical or subtropical forests, dwelling, at least partially, in trees; this alone explains his continued survival in face of the large beasts of prey. Fruits, nuts and roots served him as food; the formation of articulate speech was the main achievement of this period. None of the peoples that became known during the historical period were any longer in this primeval state. Although this period may have lasted for many thousands of years, we have no direct evidence of its existence, but once we admit the descent of man from the animal kingdom, the acceptance of this transitional stage is inevitable.

2. *Middle Stage.*—Begins with the utilisation of fish (under which head we also include crabs, shellfish and other aquatic animals) for food and with the employment of fire. These two are complementary, since fish food becomes fully available only by the use of fire. This new food, however, made man independent of climate and locality. By following the rivers and coasts man was able, even in his savage state, to spread over the greater part of the earth's surface. The crude,



unpolished stone implements of the earlier Stone Age—the so-called paleolithic—which belong wholly, or predominantly, to this period, and are scattered over all the continents, are evidence of these migrations. The newly-occupied territories as well as the unceasingly active urge for discovery, linked with their command of the art of producing fire by friction, made available new food stuffs, such as farinaceous roots and tubers, baked in hot ashes or in baking pits (ground ovens), and game, which was occasionally added to the diet after the invention of the first weapons—clubs and spears. Exclusively hunting peoples, such as figure in books, *i.e.*, peoples subsisting *solely* by hunting, have never existed, for the fruits of the chase are much too precarious to make that possible. As a consequence of the continued uncertainty with regard to sources of food stuffs, cannibalism appears to have arisen at this stage, and continued for a long time. The Australians and many Polynesians are to this day in this middle stage of savagery.

3. *Upper Stage*.—Begins with the invention of the bow and arrow, whereby wild game became a regular item of food, and hunting one of the normal occupations. Bow, string and arrow constitute a very composite instrument, the invention of which presupposes long accumulated experience and sharpened mental powers, and, consequently, a simultaneous acquaintance with a host of other inventions. If we compare the peoples which, although familiar with the bow and arrow, are not yet acquainted with the art of pottery (from which point Morgan dates the transition to barbarism), we find, even at this early stage, beginnings of settlement in villages, a certain mastery of the production of means of subsistence: wooden vessels and utensils, finger weaving (without looms) with filaments of bast, baskets woven from bast or rushes, and polished (neolithic) stone implements. For the most part, also, fire and the stone axe have already provided the dug-out canoe and, in places, timber and planks for housebuilding. All these advances are to be found, for example, among the Indians of North-Western America, who, although familiar with the bow and arrow know nothing of pottery. The bow and arrow was for savagery what the iron sword was for barbarism and fire-arms for civilisation—namely, the decisive weapon.



## BARBARISM

1. *Lower Stage*.—Dates from the introduction of pottery. This latter had its origin, demonstrably in many cases and probably everywhere, in the coating of baskets or wooden vessels with clay in order to render them fireproof; whereby it was soon discovered that moulded clay also served the purpose without the inner vessel.

Up to this point we could regard the course of evolution as being generally valid for a definite period among all peoples, irrespective of locality. With the advent of barbarism, however, we reach a stage where the difference in natural endowment of the two great continents begins to assert itself. The characteristic feature of the period of barbarism is the domestication and breeding of animals and the cultivation of plants. Now the Eastern Continent, the so-called Old World, contained almost all the animals suitable for domestication and all the cultivable cereals with one exception; while the Western, American, contained only one domesticable mammal, the llama, and this only in a part of the South, and only one cereal fit for cultivation, but that the best, maize. The effect of these different natural conditions was that from now on the population of each hemisphere went its own special way, and the landmarks on the border lines between the various stages are different in each of the two cases.

2. *Middle Stage*.—Begins, in the East, with the domestication of animals; in the West, with the cultivation of edible plants by means of irrigation, and with the use of adobes (bricks dried in the sun) and stone for buildings.

In the East, the middle stage of barbarism commenced with the domestication of milk- and meat-yielding animals, while plant cultivation appears to have remained unknown until very late in this period. The domestication and breeding of cattle and the formation of large herds seem to have been the cause of the differentiation of the Aryans and the Semites from the remaining mass of barbarians. Names of cattle are still common to the European and the Asiatic Aryans, the names of cultivable plants hardly at all.

In suitable places the formation of herds led to pastoral life; among the Semites, on the grassy plains of the Euphrates



and the Tigris; among the Aryans, on those of India, of the Oxus (Amu Darya) and the Jaxartes (Syr Darya), of the Don and the Dnieper. The domestication of animals must have been first accomplished on the borders of such pasture lands. It thus appears to later generations that the pastoral peoples originated in areas which, far from being the cradle of mankind, were, on the contrary, almost uninhabitable for their savage forbears and even for people in the lower stage of barbarism. Conversely, once these barbarians of the middle stage had taken to pastoral life, it would never occur to them to leave the grassy watered plains of their own accord and return to the forest regions which had been the home of their ancestors. Even when the Aryans and Semites were driven further north and west, they found it impossible to settle in the forest regions of Western Asia and Europe until they had been enabled, by the cultivation of cereals, to feed their cattle on this less favourable soil, and particularly to pass the winter there. It is more than probable that the cultivation of cereals was introduced here primarily because of the necessity of providing fodder for cattle and only later became important for human nourishment.

The plentiful meat and milk diet among the Aryans and the Semites, and particularly the beneficial effects of these foods on the development of children, may perhaps, explain the superior development of these two races. In fact, the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, who are reduced to an almost exclusively vegetarian diet, have a smaller brain than the more meat- and fish-eating Indians in the lower stage of barbarism. At any rate, cannibalism gradually disappears at this stage, and survives only as a religious rite or, what is almost identical in this instance, sorcery.

3. *Upper Stage*.—Begins with the smelting of iron ore and passes into civilisation through the invention of alphabetic writing and its utilisation for literary records. At this stage, which, as we have already noted, was traversed independently only in the Eastern hemisphere, more progress was made in production than in all the previous stages put together. To it belong the Greeks of the Heroic Age, the Italian tribes shortly before the foundation of Rome, the Germans of Tacitus and the Normans of the days of the Vikings.

Above all, we here encounter for the first time the iron



ploughshare drawn by cattle, making possible land cultivation on a wide scale—tillage—and, in the conditions then prevailing, a practically unlimited increase in the means of subsistence; in connection with this we find also the clearing of forests and their transformation into arable and pasture land—which, again, would have been impossible on a wide scale without the iron axe and spade. But with this there also came a rapid increase of the population and dense populations in small areas. Prior to tillage only very exceptional circumstances could have brought together half a million people under one central leadership; in all probability this never happened.

In the poems of Homer, particularly the *Iliad*, we find the upper stage of barbarism at its zenith. Improved iron tools, the bellows, the handmill, the potter's wheels, the making of oil, wine and the working-up of metals developing into an art, waggons and war chariots, ship-building with planks and beams, the beginnings of architecture as an art, walled towns with towers and battlements, the Homeric epic and the entire mythology—these are the chief heritages carried over by the Greeks in their transition from barbarism to civilisation. If we compare with this Caesar's and even Tacitus' descriptions of the Germans, who were on the threshold of that stage of culture from which the Homeric Greeks were preparing to advance to a higher one, we will see how rich was the development of production in the upper stage of barbarism.

The picture of the evolution of mankind through savagery and barbarism to the beginnings of civilisation that I have here sketched after Morgan is already rich enough in new and, what is more, incontestable features—incontestable because they are taken straight from production; nevertheless it will appear faint and meagre compared with the picture which will unfold itself at the end of our journey. Only then will it be possible to give a full view of the transition from barbarism to civilisation and the striking contrast between the two. For the time being we can generalize Morgan's periodization as follows: Savagery—the period in which the appropriation of natural products, ready for use, predominated; the things produced by man were, in the main, instruments that facilitated this appropriation. Barbarism—the period in which knowledge of cattle-breeding and land cultivation was acquired, in which methods of increasing the productivity of nature through human activity were learnt. Civilisation—the period in which knowledge of the further



working-up of natural products, of industry proper, and of art was acquired.<sup>2</sup>

### CIVILISATION

When human society has entered the period of civilisation, it means that the primitive commune has ended. The striking contrast between barbarism and civilisation is summed up by Engels thus. He says:

Civilisation is that stage of development of society at which division of labour, the resulting exchange between individuals, and commodity production, which combines the two, reach their complete unfoldment and revolutionise the whole hitherto existing society.<sup>3</sup>

Exchange and commodity production give birth to private property, to differences of rich and poor, to classes, to exploitation of one class by another, to slavery, to the supremacy of man over woman, to the fixed antithesis between town and country and finally to the State, as organ of the exploiting class for keeping down the oppressed and exploited class.

With this constitution as its foundation civilisation has accomplished things with which the old gentile society was totally unable to cope. But it accomplished them by playing on the most sordid instincts and passions of man, and by developing them at the expense of all his other faculties. Naked greed has been the moving spirit of civilisation from the first day of its existence to the present time; wealth, more wealth and wealth again; wealth, not of society, but of this shabby individual was its sole and determining aim. If, in the pursuit of this aim, the increasing development of science and repeated periods of the fullest blooming of art fell into its lap, it was only because without them the ample present day achievements in the accumulation of wealth would have been impossible.<sup>4</sup>

So when we look into the history of the Ancient Aryan, we shall have to first find out the instruments of production at his disposal and how he produced with them. That should give us the structure of his organisation—his production relations and then his ideology, morals, family relations, etc.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Moscow, 1954, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.



### CHAPTER III

## YAJNA: THE COLLECTIVE MODE OF PRODUCTION OF THE ARYAN COMMUNE

VEDIC literature and the Epic of *Mahabharata* are full of stories of Creation and the early life of man on this earth. Apart from mere speculation and fantasy, which proceed from men in the state of savagery, the *Vedic* tradition preserves a record or recollection of the early state of their ancestors, their way of living, working and growing. The Hindu Aryan at a later stage developed his own theory of social (Aryan) development, of men and the whole Creation. He created a system to depict the development, called the system of *Yugas* and *Manvantaras*. The system was not only fantasy or mere speculation. It contained a substratum of the social changes that social memory narrated to him, which he clothed with the imagery of the savage or barbarian. Man in that stage clothes all phenomena, everything around him, with life and intelligence or consciousness. He reads the world after himself. He has not yet cut his navel-string with nature and is still very much a part of it. So, sun, moon, stars, the seasons, trees, stones, rivers, earth—all are personified into powers, gods, goddesses, etc. The dead still live for him and though buried, burnt and gone, still sit with him and have their feed. But behind all this backwardness which, in the absence of science and mastery of nature and society, is bound to produce the imagery and ideology that is found in every primitive people, there is also the determining factor of social life, of the mode of production, the level of productive forces and production relations. Myths and mythology cannot fail to express these relations, which in fact are an essence of these myths.

The chief feature of the Hindu system of looking at history, or in fact the whole universe, is that it considers history as being



not static but always moving and changing. These changes are attended with great struggles and disasters until a new stage arrives and stabilises for a time. The changes primarily affect man and his social life, to such an extent that the characteristics of one epoch become quite their opposite in another. Without going into the details of this here, we can note that his dynamic view of change, of history, ultimately is divested of all its value by being turned into a mechanical dogmatic cycle of movements pre-destined by God. But before the Hindu historian reached the dogmatic stage, he faithfully recorded the changes that social memory related to him.

All Time, *i.e.*, social history, is divided into four *Yugas*, named the *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dvapara* and *Kali*. Human or Aryan society began with the *Krita* age, went through the next two, and since the end of the Mahabharata war entered the *Kali* age, which has not yet ended !

Thus, according to the Hindu historian, human society, or his one rather, has gone through four definite and demarcated epochs of development. Each of these four epochs has its own law of social organisation, which means laws of production and distribution of wealth, laws of social relations, laws of marriage and family and laws of morality and worship etc.

The point that Hindu literature wants to emphasise is that with each change in the *Yuga*, what changes in man is *Dharma*. And what is *Dharma*? His mode of existence,\* the law of his being. And being is concerned mainly with what? With the production of wealth and his own reproduction, *i.e.*, sex or marriage. He calls it *Artha* and *Kama*.

Whatever the Hindu idealists may preach, their ancient ancestors valued material reality as the foundation of social existence and man's life.

How do the Hindu philosophers of history describe the four *Yugas* of social development?

The *Aitareya Brahmana* describes them thus (VII-15) :

The *Krita* grows in wandering.†

The *Treta* is standing.

\* धू धारयति इति धर्मः

† कलिः शयानो भवति संजिहानस्तु द्वापरः ।

उत्तिष्ठस्त्रेता भवति कृतं संपद्यते चरन् ॥



The Dvapara is slowly moving.

The Kali is one sleeping or resting.

The demarcation between the first three and the fourth *Kali*, is very marked, and being contemporary to the writers, it has been noted with great care and wealth of detail in various works, which we will see later on.

How do the *Vedas* describe man's development through these ages? Do they describe changes in the instruments of production and the relations of production in society? How does the *Vedic* writer describe social development in answer to such questions?

All *Vedic* literature is dominated with but one demand and the measures for fulfilment of that demand—namely *wealth*, meaning primarily *food* and more *men* (man-power)—*Dhanam* and *Praja*. The first *Dhanam*, describes his instruments of production, his economic productive activity, and, as an adjunct of that, the second one—*Praja*. All *Vedic Samhitas* contain abundant material on these two questions.

The struggle for food was a very hard one; with those crude stone tools it was bound to be so. The precarious existence of the wandering savage, with uncertainty of food, with no shelter, no fire, no protection against Nature and wild beasts, caused a shudder in the memory of the Aryan. Whole groups of societies perished in the struggle for food and sometimes men wondered if they would all perish in the battle. The fear is expressed by the *Vedic* philosopher in his own way. His struggle for food, existence and creation or reproduction was tantamount to the efforts of the Creator, *Prajapati*, who also is said to have been faced with the same problem. *Prajapati*, the Creator, suffered several 'abortions' in the act of creation of the world and himself was threatened with extinction for want of food.

But then milk was created and given to *Prajapati*, it revived him. Then he roasted and ate eleven selected animals.<sup>1</sup> Thus the world was born and survived. If that was the plight of God, the Creator, you can imagine the condition of man!

Hence the Aryan gods asked their leader Indra to battle hard with the weapons of stone and bone, *Vajra* and *Asthi*, the sharp

<sup>1</sup> *Rigveda*, 3—9—1—1 ; 2—5



bones of *Dadheechi*, and fight against *Vritra*, against *Vishwarupa*, who would not give the means of livelihood to anyone.

For thousands of years men roamed the earth in the condition of savagery of the *Krita* age. They went through several lands, driven from each by lack of food or by disease, or hostile neighbours, and so on. A very ancient note on this is found in the *Vendidad*, which mentions sixteen lands through which early Aryan man had to wander, before he settled down. The *Vendidad* migration does not relate only to the period of savagery but refers to later periods also, but not the age of *Kali* or civilisation.

Under such conditions, there could be no question of holding private property, employing slaves, building a State; in short, there could be no society based on classes, of the exploiters and the exploited. Whatever was produced or caught had to be done with collective labour and consumed collectively. Man individually was powerless to fight and survive against Nature.

The next stage in the evolution of tools was when man discovered *fire* and the art of *domestication of animals*. The earliest savage knew not how to produce fire or domesticate an animal. The discovery of fire and domestication caused a revolution in man's social organisation and life.

'Both these advances became directly new means of emancipation for man.'<sup>2</sup>

Fire certainly had been observed in the forests, in the lightning of the clouds falling on trees and blasting them. Man had seen it as a terrible destructive force of Nature, burning down everything with great fury.<sup>3</sup> But the point was to produce it at will and hold it in man's service as a controllable force or instrument. With the Aryan that task seems to have been done by one Angiras or the Angiras gens. Angiras is one of the common ancestor *Pravaras* of the Aryans. The discovery of

<sup>2</sup> 'The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man' by Engels, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1949, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Rigveda*, 1—143—5; 1—65—4

*Rigveda*, 5—2—8; 10—32—6.

*Rigveda*, 5—11—6.



fire by Angiras is referred to in the *Rigveda* in any number of places.\*

The Aryans had at last that instrument which immediately caused a great revolution in their life. The revolution was so great that all later Aryan life is ascribed to fire, revolves round it and is centred on it. Creation, existence, growth, wealth, happiness, all proceed from fire (*Agni*). The two most vital changes resulting from it are the production of wealth in cattle and population (*Praja-Pashavah*).

Fire made the products of the hunt and fish easily digestible when roasted or cooked on it. Hence the great god Agni is called *Amad*, eater of raw food, and *Kravyad*, eater of dead flesh. It scared off wild animals, hostile goblins and ghosts;<sup>4</sup> it could be thrown as a weapon in the form of burning cinders of wood or torches against wild animals<sup>5</sup> and enemies who had no such invention as yet. It protected man from the inclemencies of weather and made movement and sight possible in the darkness of the night, which could be very long and cold in the oppressive Siberian regions.

Allied with fire came the art of domestication of animals which solved the most pressing problem of stable supply of food.<sup>6</sup> Hunting and fishing provided such a precarious supply of food that man had to resort to cannibalism. Once fire (*Agni*) came down from the heavens to man's house, and cattle could be made his permanent docile companions to feed him with meat and milk, to provide him with skins and hair for clothing, for warmth and other uses, with bones and horns to be made into his useful tools, life jumped into an altogether new and higher age. The *Yuga* or epoch changed.

The leader of all this change was again the *Agni*, who later on makes smelting of ores possible and thus causes another revolution—but of that later on, not now. Hence the *Rigveda* calls fire the leader and protector of the settlements of man. He is the *Vishpati*, *Vish* meaning settlement. He alone made households possible. He is the oldest and greatest friend of

\* त्वाम् अग्ने अंगिरसो गुहाहितम् अन्वविन्दन् शिश्रियाणं वने वने ।

स जायसे मध्यमानः सनो महत्तमाहुः ॥

<sup>4</sup> *Rigveda*, 3—15—1.

<sup>5</sup> *Rigveda*, 3—15—1.

<sup>6</sup> *Rigveda*, 6—69—2 ; 5—29—7 ; 1—58—5, etc.



mankind, sent by the gods for the benefit of man. In fact the gods got their food only through him.

The practical discovery of the conversion of mechanical motion into heat is so very ancient that it can be taken as dating from the beginning of human history. Whatever discoveries, in the way of tools and domestication of animals, may have preceded it, the making of fire by friction was the first instance of men pressing a non-living force of nature into their service. Popular superstitions to-day still show how greatly the almost immeasurable import of this gigantic advance impressed itself on the mind of mankind. Long after the introduction of the use of bronze and iron the discovery of the stone knife, the first tool, continued to be celebrated, all religious sacrifices being performed with stone knives. According to the Jewish legend, Joshua decreed that men born in the wilderness should be circumcised with stone knives; the Celts and Germans used stone knives exclusively in their human sacrifices. But all this long ago passed into oblivion. It was different with the making of fire by friction. Long after other methods of producing fire had become known, every sacred fire among the majority of peoples had to be obtained by friction. But even to-day, popular superstition in the majority of the European countries insists that fire with miraculous powers (e.g., our German bon-fire against epidemics) may be lighted only by means of friction. Thus, down to our own day, the grateful memory of the first great victory of mankind over nature lives on—half unconsciously—in popular superstition, in the relics of heathen-mythological recollections; among the most educated peoples in the world.<sup>7</sup>

Aryan man thus built all his new life round fire and cattle, built society with the new instruments of production and productive forces on a new level. A mode of production came into existence which produced for the first time wealth and plenty compared to the former age of instability, wandering, ruin and annihilation, the 'abortion' of Creation and Creator. The new mode, the new productive forces, lifted man from savagery to barbarism, from the *Krita* age to the *Treta* age, from wanderings to settlements, from starvation and occasional cannibalism to assured supply of food, shelter and defence, from nakedness to covering, from helplessness before Nature to strength and growth. He was wandering and panting, he now stood with confidence and beamed with happiness, smiles and songs.

<sup>7</sup> F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, pp. 79-80 (London, 1946).



What did he call this new mode of production, this new social organisation, this new art he had achieved?

*Vedic* tradition says that with the rise of fire, the taming of animals and the building of settlements (*Vishas* or *Vrajas*), *Yajna* came into existence, *Brahman*, the Creator, gave *Yajna* to man\* in the *Treta* age,† which was not there in the *Krita*. Tradition says that *Yajna* was the greatest gift of *Brahman* to man, lifting him out of one *Yuga* into another.

*Yajna* is the new mode of production in which Aryan society enters with the discovery of fire. The new existence of the man of *Yajna* mode leads to prosperity and development of *Brahman*. When *Yajna* is performed, *Brahman*, creation, so to say, begins to come into existence. It cannot live outside *Yajna* nor without it. *Yajna* is its very mode of existence. Thus we may define early *Brahman* and *Yajna* as follows: *BRAHMAN is the commune of Aryan man and YAJNA is its mode of production, the primitive commune with the collective mode of production.* And the *Vedas* are the knowledge of this mode of production, of this way of life of the great *Brahman*, the commune. That is the way Aryan Hindu tradition puts history on record; and that is the key to the understanding of the earliest epoch of Aryan history, of its epoch of primitive communism.

Historical materialism says that primitive communism is imposed on social man by the extreme *backwardness* of the productive forces, by poverty of production, and not by abundance of production. If anything is to be produced, it is possible only by collective labour; private production, private consumption, private households are an impossibility. Men's relations to one another are governed by this necessity. This is the chief characteristic of the primitive commune. Does the *Yajna* mode of production lay down these characteristics, does the *Brahman*, the primitive commune, its life, culture and ideology, its morals and ethics exhibit the characteristics of primitive communism or collectivism as has been seen in the history of all primitive peoples? Do the *Yajna* mode and the *Brahman* show us these

\* सव यज्ञाः प्रजा सृष्ट्वा

† त्रेतायुगे विधिस्तु एष यज्ञानाम्

न कृतयुगे—महाभारत, शान्ति पर्व ( २३८-१०१ )

त्रेतादौ यज्ञाः—महाभारत, शान्ति पर्व ( २४४-२४ )



essential features of primitive communism, which have been noted by Morgan, explained by Marx and Engels, and have had to be partly admitted by even bourgeois scholars who deny the theory of historical materialism? They do. Let us proceed to see how.

The essential features of the primitive commune, of its mode of production and life, are : collective labour and consumption; no private property; no division of labour to begin with, but later on it appears with the developing productive forces; no classes; the organisation is a gens organisation based on matriarchy, all of whose members are kins, private family and marriage, as known to later civilisation, have not come into existence; all functions are elective by the whole commune; there is no State with its army, police and taxes to enforce the production relations or property relations, hence no State law and machinery of force to enforce it.

When these appear the commune has broken down and collectivism has vanished.

The *Vedic* literature mentions all these characteristics in its own way, while describing the various *Yajnas* of the Hindu Aryan society. The *Vedic Samhitas* are a collection of records and memory of various epochs. They mention *Yajnas* as a factor governing all life, when the gods performed them and lived in them and through them. They also mention *Yajnas* which are now rituals, performed by rich men and kings, or poor householders with the aid of the priest-Brahmins to please the gods and attain their ends. It is our task to sift the earliest *Yajna*, representing the real primitive mode of production and life, from the later rituals—the living *Yajna*, so to say, from the dead ritual.

Scholars of *Vedic* literature have done the sifting to some extent but find it hard to place it in history. The greatest confusion prevails naturally with regard to the most OBSCURE *Yajna* said to have been performed by the gods. Obscure it is, because it is mentioned in the literature in such a manner as to suggest that when the *Vedic* ritual was coded, it was not in current existence. This obscure *Yajna* is the *Satra* and *Kratu*. What were these *Satras* and *Kratu*s, when did they exist and what were their characteristics?

*Satras* and *Kratu*s existed in full bloom when the gods did



the *Yajnas*. Later the Aryans rarely imitated them, but they continued to derive their *Yajnas* from this earliest *Yajna*. Gods in the mythology of the Aryans stand for their ancient ancestors, as also the personified natural phenomena. They can more or less be so distinguished from each other. *Satra performed by gods is the collective form of labour of the early Aryans.*

The most outstanding characteristic of the *Satra* is that all the participants in it are *Ritvijas* and *Yajamanas*. What does this mean? In the later *Yajna* ritual, the performing people are divided into various categories of *Ritvijas*, who are then engaged by a private householder, called the *Yajamana*, who pays for the *Yajna* ceremony. Not so in the *Satra*. It was a collective functioning in the pristine manner, in which all participated in the collective labour without distinction or division of labour. The division of labour into the seventeen categories of *Ritvijas* of the later Aryan society had not yet come into existence.

The second characteristic of *Satra*, unlike the later *Yajnas*, is that the *Yajnaphal*,\* i.e., the proceeds of labour, is a joint or collective product, to be distributed collectively and equally, and consumed collectively, the procedure being symbolised in the ritual of *Samakhya*,\*\* i.e., drinking *Soma*-juice from one and the same pot. This *Samakhya* in the *Agnistoma* of *Somayaga Yajna* is not done in any other *Yajna* and hence has a deep characteristic meaning in the *Satra*.

The third characteristic is that all the participants in the *Satra* are of the same *Gotra*, i.e., blood-relations, which is not the case in other *Yajnas*. This means that the commune was constituted of blood-relations or kins only and there was no non-kin in its fold. Before beginning the collective *Satra* labour or social task, all put their hands together and vowed to co-operate to the end without fail and with one mind. That was called the *Tanoona-patraprachar*.†

Every communal labour requires someone set aside to coordinate and guide the labour process according to plan. Hence the fourth characteristic was that men were elected to

\* यज्ञफल

\*\* समाख्या

† तानून-पत्रप्रचार



temporary functional roles, when work became varied and as productive forces grew, from which arose the *Pravarana-vidhi*, †† the act of choosing, electing. When work was over, the functionaries dissolved in the commonhood of the commune.

The fifth characteristic was that both men and women participated in the *Satra Yajna* or labour, which is not the case with later *Yajnas*.

All these characteristics of *Satra* labour or *Satra Yajna* show the existence of the primitive commune among the early Aryans.

Some *Vedic* scholars would ask the question if the *Satras* were not merely the *Yajnas* of the private householder, with which the later *Vedic* tradition, as given in the *Sutras*, abounds? This is ruled out by the above characteristics of which number one, three, four and five can never be found in the private household *Yajna*.

Some would ask if the *Satras* were not just some special celebration for a special occasion? Tilak, who paid some attention to these *Satras* in his *Arctic Home in the Vedas*, considered them as the most ancient *Yajna* and held that it was a collective name for the daily *Yajnas* repeated over a number of days and months by the Aryans. Tilak did not call them the collective mode of life of the primitive commune. But it is clear from the discussions of almost all *Vedic* scholars who had any social viewpoint on the *Yajna* question, that the *Satra* was the sum total of the day-to-day activities of the commune for the sustenance of its life and for reproduction. And because of this the word *Satra* came to signify in the Sanskrit language the sense of 'simultaneity,' 'togetherness,' 'collectivity.' \*

Let us take the case of the famous *Triratratu*, by performing which the gods attained great wealth. This *Kratu* shows us how the Aryans of the most ancient times produced and reared their cattle wealth. The *Akhyayika* or *Yajna legend* tells us how it arose and what its procedure was. The speciality of the *Triratratu* is that it is a combination of three *Kratu*s, united in one and carried out collectively. The story regarding its origin is as follows: Amongst the gods there were three god-communes (*Deva Ganas*) named Vasu, Rudra and Aditya,

†† प्रवरण-विधि

\* साकं सत्रा समं सह इति अमरः



*Prajapati* created these collectives. The *Akhyayika* uses the term *Gana* and *Samgha* for them. He gave to each collective a fire and asked them to worship it. All of them worshipped this fire for one year collectively and produced one cow. *Prajapati* was pleased with their great efforts and gave the cow to the *Vasu Gana* collective for production. There they reared from her 333 cows. *Prajapati* took the original cow from *Vasu* and gave it to the *Rudras* who also got 333 cows. The *Adityas* repeated the process. Then they pooled all the 999 cows plus the original one and made a *Yajna* with 1,000 cows, which were given away as *Dakshina* or gift (as the later commentators say).

The above *Akhyayika* gives us all the essentials in a plain and clear manner of the early collective mode of production of the Aryan gens. The first characteristic is that those who perform the *Kratu* are gods of *Gana-Samgha*, that is, living in the ancient democratic primitive commune or gentile organisation. Secondly, all their collective efforts on three *Agnis* (fires) yield one cow, which emphasises the impossibility of individual distribution or ownership of the product. Three *Ganas* cannot divide one cow if it is to be a source of further wealth, which it is in the story. Thirdly, as the *Gana-Samghas* grow in wealth, some sort of equalisation of the product is indicated by the uniformity of the number in the herd and the rotation of the cow round to all the *Ganas*. Fourthly, all production and gain of wealth is pooled together in the collective of all the three *Ganas* and collectively consumed which is the *Yajna*. There can be no clearer description of the early collective *Yajna* mode of production and distribution than this!

Let us now see what kind of day-to-day labour, according to the *Yajna* mode, the whole commune performed. The main activities of *Satra* labour can be easily extracted from the *Agnistoma* of *Somayaga*, from the *Shadanga Kratu* and *Devasatra*.

The primitive commune was a very small unit, just like the small hut-settlements that we find among the tribal Polynesians or even today in some Indian villages. The main wealth of the commune, cattle, were especially protected in stone enclosures, which sometimes were made large enough to cover



the whole settlements. They were called *Ashmavraja*, comparable to the stone-hedges of ancient Europe. The great central fire fed by the *Samidh* fuel wood was the centre of life. It was housed in a wooden rectangular structure<sup>9</sup> about 36 feet by 48 feet which also served as the common kitchen of the commune. Just nearby was built the communal house, where were kept pots of milk, curds, *ghee*, corn, etc., etc. A special structure was raised for storing *Soma*-weed for preparing and fermenting the juice and its special drinking pots called *Grahas*. That was the brewery of the commune. The common meeting ground was marked off on which seats were built of mud dug out from a nearby place called the *Chatval*, and over them grass or *Barhi* was spread to sit on. All assembled on this oblong ground, the *Mahavedi*, to do the day's labour, to eat and to enjoy what had been gained by god Agni's favour.

It would appear that the members were numerous enough to require with all the appurtenances an oblong piece of ground whose east-west length was about 108 feet and whose north-south side at the eastern end was 72 feet and at the western end 90 feet. Nearby was marked the space for the refuse to be thrown.

It was the task of the *Hota* every morning to give a call to the gods and men to assemble. Then tasks were allotted. Some went to bring *Soma*-weed and pound it into juice. Some went to cut the grass for seats and for being plaited into 'clothing' and head-dresses, grass for ropes to tie the cattle, grass to cover the houses. Some went to cut wood for fire. The *Duhita* milked the cows and sheep, the *Shamita* cut the beast for the meals, skinned it and put it on fire for cooking. Corn was pounded in wooden receptacles and on stones. The grinding-mill had not yet been invented. Pots had to be fashioned from earth. Smelting of ore had not yet been invented. Baskets were made from cane, wood or grass. The elected *Grihapati* directed men and women to their tasks. The various *Adhwaryus* of the jobs instructed and participated in labour, the *Brahman* supervised and pointed out mistakes here and there; the *Udgata* led the songs to cheer them up and assist in the rhythm that every collective labour demands. Labour

<sup>9</sup> Called the प्रज्ञास-मंडप



was not light but neither was it dull. It was hard enough when you see that flour could not be ground for want of a mill and grass had to be cut with horse-rib bones sharpened to edges. The animal could not be killed with a sword and skinned with a knife, because metal smelting had not been invented, and so it had to be killed with a cudgel or smothered and then skinned with bones. This shows the backwardness of the instruments of production and hence the backwardness of *Yajna*-labour and its commune.

Everything that was produced came to the *Mahavedi* direct for use and consumption, as *Dharma* demanded. After the gods and *Pitaras* were given their share (the *Havi*, without which they could not live—this, of course, in the case when the *Yajna* applied to man), what was left, *i.e.*, the *Hutashesha*, was for all to consume. The daily *Havana* was nothing but the mode of distribution of food, collectively produced, to the whole commune, and as such was an integral part of the *Yajna*.

All work began and was interspersed with the exhilarating drinks of *Soma*, aided with backed flour *Purodashas*, with parched barley and rice mixed with curds and milk. The heaviest and pleasing meal of the day was the feast of meat, and the Aryan scrupled at nothing in the matter. There was not one living thing that he shunned in this matter, the most common, of course, being the goat, sheep and deer. The cow and the bull were also eaten, but, being more valuable, their turn came with less frequency. Well-fed and well-drunk, they slept round the fire in promiscuity in early days, or retired with their selected pairs to their huts when later on the pairing family developed in the commune household. Man was pleased and so was *Agni*. Thus the *Brahman*, the commune, lived and laboured, enjoyed and multiplied.



## CHAPTER IV

### YAJNA, BRAHMAN AND VEDA

It would not be out of place here to pay some attention to the meaning of the word '*Yajna*' and its derivation. The word '*Yajna*' is not a word but a sentence formed of *ya*, *ja* and *na*. The root *ya* or *i* meant 'to go, to gather'; *ja* meant to beget; *na*, *an*, *ant* were terminations signifying third-person-plural form of the verb. Thus put together the sentence meant: 'They gather together and beget.' What? Things and children. Similarly, the word '*Yajus*' or '*Yajur*' in *Yajurveda* is a sentence. *Yaj* and *us* or *ur*. Thus *ur* also is a pronominal termination of third person plural, the whole meaning again: 'They gather together and beget.' Later on the sentence acquired the form of a noun, *Yajna*, a mode of organisation of production in common of things and men, and *Veda* is the knowledge of this mode.

The *Yajna* is thus the collective mode of production of the ancient Aryan, before he developed private property, classes and State. As soon as that happens, the old *Satra* and *Kratu* go out of existence, and *Yajna* then survives as purely a ritual, a form of worship, a social memory. The later Aryans inherit the belief in the *Yajna*, as it is under the *Yajna* that their society flourished; it is out of *Yajna* and the primitive commune that the later society of classes and castes was born. The social reality with all its ideology and beliefs had become a part of social inheritance. So, when the reality vanished, its ideology survived as a ritual and the new classes utilising that ideology made the ritual and surviving belief a weapon to consolidate their power over the mass of the people, whom now they exploited in the new economy and new social order. People then were led to believe that if a certain *Yajna* process of the



ancient Aryans were imitated in a ritual, exactly and correctly, the same results of prosperity would follow. The *Yajna* ritual became an imitation of the *Yajna* reality. We will see how this came about later on. But the point that is to be emphasised here is that all *Vedic* scholars, European and Indian, though holding that some parts of the *Yajna* ritual do express the early living conditions of the Aryans,<sup>1</sup> could not explain *Satras* and *Kratu*s, the peculiar life of the Aryans found in the later rituals, and several other things in the *Yajna* system, such as the confusion of *Gotras* and *Pravaras* (of which we will write later). Their failure arose from their conception that *Yajna* was basically a worship of gods or deified natural forces which in parts alone symbolised some social actions and conditions. If a bone was used to cut grass and stone to pound corn, they concluded that there was no iron-knife and no grinding-mill. That was the only 'social' conclusion that these scholars drew. That way *Yajna*, its hold over the Aryan, his idea that it is the originator of life and wealth, his being full of nothing but *Yajna* in all his living and thinking cannot be explained except by saying that the barbarian believed that way in supernatural forces. That bone and stone tools, a recent discovery of fire and taming of animals cause a social revolution and man evolves a new collective mode of production, and that these two discoveries affect the commune profoundly and hence man is full of its ideology and naturally so, could not be understood by our *Vedic* historians. Only when *Yajna* is taken as a mode of production can we make sense of his early history. The history of the development of man from savagery to barbarism and thence to civilisation does contain sense though mixed with supernatural nonsense. Social life cannot be built on mere figment of imagination and worship rituals. And it is our task to reach to the social life through the fog of fantasy and rituals.

The other thing that baffles our scholars is that thing called '*Brahman*.' In the *Yajna* process, in the stories of creation

<sup>1</sup> Kunte has written a whole chapter explaining how the *Soma-yaga* represents the migration of the Aryans, the most outstanding fact which he uses being that in the *Yajna* ritual today the pandal in which *Agni* (fire) is housed is to be constructed on four wheels and the *Yupa* (the wooden post to which the sacrificial animals are tied before killing) is not buried but is made with a broad base as can make it stand and easily move.



and social growth, the *Brahman* is constantly recurring but refuses to be caught and fixed by the historians.

They very well see that this *Brahman* of the *Vedic* Aryan is quite different from the *Brahman* of the *Upanishadic* philosophers. The *Vedic* barbarian in his primitive commune, not yet confronted by social contradictions, class struggles and exploitation, was far away from developing the idealist philosophy and cant of the later *Upanishadic* period. The *Upanishadic Brahman* is the original intelligence, consciousness or spirit whose manifestation is the world. That *Brahman* is without qualities (*Nirguna*) while the *Vedic* one is objectively real, with qualities (*Saguna*). The former is realisable only by those subjective processes of contemplation which we find in the *Yoga* or *Vedanta* philosophy, while the *Vedic* one is an objective reality enjoyed through the quite material efforts of man. The *Vedic Brahman* enjoys life, cats, drinks, dances, is happy and growing. The *Upanishadic Brahman* is beyond senses, even reason, without feelings and emotions, to whom eating, drinking, enjoying is taboo, and through that taboo and starvation alone is it approachable! The healthy growing living *Vedic* Aryan had no use for a non-existent, subjective, senseless, miserable, 'Udaseen' *Brahman*. To the *Vedic* Aryan *Brahman* lived in the collective commune and in the Universe and, therefore, he himself was a part of it. To the *Vedic* Aryan, the *Brahman* was the commune and its members, and like the barbarian he attached the moon, heavens, earth and all to the commune, which with the *Agni* (fire) was, of course, the centre of everything.

*Vedic* scholars have seen this in the literature, but being under the influence of idealist philosophy want to make this *Brahman* a mysterious thing. Haug, Eggeling, Hillebrandt, Ketkar, Tilak and all went round and round this *Brahman* and failed to identify him, just as they failed to identify the *Yajna*. Haug collects all the meanings of *Brahman* from the famous commentator Sayana and lists them as follows: *Brahman* means (a) food or food offering,<sup>2</sup> (b) the chant of the *Saman* singer, (c) magical formula,

<sup>2</sup> In following Sayana, these scholars are on the wrong track. In the chapter of the *Rigveda*, where the praise of the *Brahmanaspati* occurs, Sayana translates the word '*Brahman*' as food, which is wrong. Rajwade discusses this and holds that it really means not 'master of food' or 'master of praise'—but 'leader of



(d) duly completed ceremonies, (e) a chant and sacrificial gift, (f) recitation of the *Hotri* priest, (g) great.

In all these meanings, there is none of the idealist philosopher and all are directly allied with or proceed from the commune and its actions. Hillebrandt comes to the conclusion that the *Brahman* in the *Rigveda* is spoken of as being new—‘as not having hitherto existed’ and as ‘coming into being from the fathers.’ It springs forth at the sound of sacrifice, begins really to exist when the *Soma*-juice is pressed and the hymns are recited at the *Havana* rite, endures with the help of the gods even in battle and *Soma* is its guardian.<sup>3</sup> On the strength of these Hillebrandt justifies the conjecture of Haug that it signifies a mysterious power which can be called forth by various ceremonies and his definition of it as the magical force which is derived from orderly co-operation of the hymns, the chants and the sacrificial gifts.<sup>4</sup>

Anyone can see from this the *Vedic* Aryan, feeling in every action and fibre of his life the existence of the commune, while collectively labouring, singing and drinking, *i.e.*, while in *Yajna*, expressed his collective existence, feeling and consciousness as the Universal *Brahman*, which was the commune, and nothing but the commune. To him, at the stage of development he was, it was a mysterious force, a thing that sprang forth and lived in *Yajna* and at its call. The exhilaration and stimulation of animal spirits in collective labour was a mysterious magical phenomenon to the barbarian. But there is no reason why we should be mystified by it.

The *Yajna*, arising from the discovery of fire and taming of animals, led to wealth, prosperity and growth of the Aryan commune and saved it from extinction. Hence, everything in

the *Brahman*—*Rishis*. Going beyond Rajwade, we can see it means ‘leader of members of the *Yajna* commune.....’ (Cf. discussion in *Radhamadhava Champoo* by Rajwade, p. 107).

<sup>3</sup> *Rigveda*: VIII 37.1, VII 69.9, VI 23.5, I 47.2, VII 29.9, VI 52. 3, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Das Gupta in *History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, pp. 20-22, 1932 edition.

Cf. Marx on the effects of co-operation in labour process: ‘Apart from the new power that arises from the fusion of many forces into one single force, mere social contact begets in most industries an emulation and a stimulation of the animal spirits that heighten the efficiency of each individual workman.’ (*Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 326.)



Aryan society centred round *Agni* and *Yajna* based on *Agni*. Thus, when later, as man progressed and invented smelting of iron and made a sickle, the Aryan religious ritual, aiming to please God as his forefathers had done and to attain wealth which his forefathers had done, imitated the actions of his forefathers and sang the same verses and cut grass for *Yajna* not with the new iron sickle but the old horse's rib. The commune had vanished, and so also the rib, but the rite could be reproduced as a symbolic ritual though not the commune and *Yajna*.

The verses could be sung but not the old collective, real happy *Brahman* could be brought to life. *Yajna*, which then was a social reality, became a fiction, but a fiction following from reality and inherited by the descendants of that society to whom *Yajna* was real; and these descendants, carrying yet with them some remnants of the old ideology and practices, held on to the verses and the ritual in the fond belief that its imitation would make them happy and give them wealth.

Later generations of Aryans, therefore, collected the *Vedic* verses as they developed through history, expressing various stages of growth of Aryan society, from the commune down to its struggles and break-up, and made them into their own ritual. They transformed the old *Yajna* into a sanction for absolutely new laws of social organism, which was the very opposite of *Yajna* law. That happened as a historical necessity whose nature we shall discuss later on. What we are concerned with here is to point out that the present *Veda Samhitas* are collections of that period when real *Yajna* society had ceased to exist. Class struggles and contradictions had come into existence and a new society was already being born within the womb of the old, but a class State had not yet finally triumphed and made itself supreme.

The *Veda Samhitas* at this stage, therefore, have by themselves become a force which they were not before. To the early Aryan, who really lived in the *Yajna*, there was no such thing as a sacred *Veda*. He himself was creating new *Richas* or *Mantras*, because of his own creative actions and words, transmission of his experience, the songs were his own creation and there was nothing mystical about these verses as such. Hence, in the early *Veda* we find mention of Indra being worshipped and *Yajna* done with 'new verses.' New verses



have completely ceased to appear in later *Yajnas*, i.e., in rituals, and it was the greatest blasphemy then to change the existing verses. And naturally so. To class society these old verses and practices had become sacred and so the *Vedas* became a textbook of religious ritual, not to be added to or altered.

The *Vedas*, being inherited from the *Yajna* of the ancient Aryans, were considered a weapon of producing wealth, very real material wealth. Sayana of the 14th century defines the *Vedas* as a book that gives man knowledge of procuring things required, 'for fulfilment of his welfare and the negation of his ills.'\* The meaning of that word in the *Rigveda* is 'wealth' from the root 'vid'—to obtain or produce—of the 6th conjugation. If 'vid' procures wealth, one must know how to procure it and that knowing or knowledge also becomes 'vid'. Knowledge or knowing has no meaning, value or function if it is not one of procuring wealth. Hence again *Veda* from the root 'vid'—'to know', of the 2nd conjugation, became 'knowledge'—'*jnana*.' Knowledge of what? Of procuring, producing, obtaining. What? The ancients answered without hesitation: '*Praja Pashvadih*'—progeny and animals.†

The memory of the growing, great (*Brahman*) ancient commune said that this mode of *Yajna*, this knowledge, existed with them since Creation came and stabilised, since the beginning of their existence, because existence begins with it. No man had, therefore, seen the *Vedas* being invented and certainly not the later class society which fostered this belief about the *Vedas*. Hence, they were declared to be without beginning (*Anadi*), always enduring (*Nitya*) and no ordinary man's creation (*Apaurusheya*)<sup>5</sup>. Man could not live without material wealth and wealth had to be as soon as man was, nay, even before him, and hence, the *Vedas* also. That was how the later Aryans reasoned.

Neither the early nor the later Aryans made any mystery of

\* श्रुतिप्राप्ति—अनिष्ट परिहारयोः अलौकिक उपायं यो  
ग्रंथो वेदवति स वेदः—सायणाचार्य

† प्रजाः पश्यादिः

<sup>5</sup> *Apaurusheya* may also mean created before the *Purusha*, the later class society described in the *Purushasukta*, was born.

अपौरुषेय



the *Vedas* in the sense in which the idealist philosopher makes a mystery of the soul and its relation to being and the question of the liberation of the soul from the thralldom of life. The Aryan compilers have been honest to tell us that what is known as the *Vedas* is really divided in two parts: one a reality, and the other a fiction—with a little dash of reality. And this fiction-cum-reality later on becomes a pure fiction inasmuch as it justifies quite a contradictory and opposite reality by pleading sanction from the sacred reality of old. This he tells us by dividing the whole Hindu lore into three parts. The real verses of the *Vedas* were really 'seen', 'revealed' by the *Rishis*—*Mantra-Drashtas* as they were later called. From seeing (*Drishti*), it went to 'hearsay' or '*Shruti*.' The *Shrutis* are fiction-cum-reality. And then the last came *Smriti*—just remembrance. If one scans these three stages of Hindu tradition and religious lore and later on law, one can see how they are nothing but the reflections of the changing social organism of the Aryans—from the primitive commune (*Mantra-Drishti*: seeing the *Vedas*) to the rise of a society full of class contradictions inside it and its break-up, but not yet complete (society guided by *Shraut Dharma*: hearing the *Vedas*), and then to the final class State and complete annihilation of the commune ushering in the *Smriti* law, which has nothing in common with the *Veda-Yajna* and its society.

At this stage the reader may raise one question: Does the whole *Vedic Yajna*, in its rituals, traditions and myths reflect *social-natural reality* though in a fantastic form or is any part of that compilation mere *bunk* devoid of any meaning? In order to answer this question without going into any detailed discussion, we may best quote Engels. He says:

All religion, however, is nothing but the phantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces. In the beginnings of history it was the forces of Nature which were at first so reflected, and in the course of further evolution they underwent the most manifold and varied personifications among the various peoples. Comparative mythology has traced back this first process, at least in the case of the Indo-European nations, to its origin in the Indian *Vedas*, and has shown its detailed evolution among the Indians, Persians, Greeks, Romans,



Germans and, so far as material is available, also among the Celts, Lithuanians and Slavs.<sup>6</sup>

But this *first* process of reflection of the forces of Nature is soon joined to the process of reflection of social forces. Engels says:

But it is not long before, side by side with the forces of Nature, social forces begin to be active; forces which present themselves to man as equally extraneous and at first equally inexplicable, dominating them with the same apparent necessity, as the forces of Nature themselves. The phantastic personifications, which at first only reflected the mysterious forces of Nature, at this point acquire social attributes, become representatives of the forces of history.<sup>7</sup>

In analysing the *Vedic* literature, so far much of the emphasis has been laid by bourgeois scholars on the first process to the neglect of the second. A proper analysis of the social attributes of the gods of mythology and their actions, which we shall be doing here, is expected to yield us, when divested of their fantastic form, the picture of the primitive commune society. Engels in his days had noted this when he said:

Comparative mythology overlooks this twofold character assumed at a later stage by the gods; it continues to pay exclusive attention to their character as reflexes of the forces of Nature, although it is this twofold character which is the basis of the confusion of mythologies which subsequently creeps in.<sup>8</sup>

Many European and Indian writers on the *Vedas* have floundered on this 'exclusive' attention.'

We try to reach to the social structure of the Aryan commune life, through their myths and gods, as found in *Vedic* literature, because, as Marx says, 'All mythology masters and dominates and shapes the forces of Nature in and through imagination.' This work of the imagination following from the social needs of existence also reveals to us the form of society in which it functions, thus helping us to understand the primitive Aryan communes, up to the point of their break-up.

At the same time, it has to be remembered that not *all* the material of the *Yajnas*, gods, myths and magic can be shown

<sup>6</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, p. 470 (Moscow, 1947).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 470-71.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471 fn.



to have any positive meaning. Some of it is pure bunk. Engels observes :

As to the realms of ideology which soar still higher in the air, religion, philosophy, etc., these have a prehistoric stock, found already in existence by, and taken over, in the historic period, of what we should to-day call bunk. These various false conceptions of nature, of man's own being, of spirits, magic forces, etc., have for the most part only a negative economic basis; but the low economic development of the prehistoric period is supplemented and also partially conditioned and even caused by the false conceptions of nature. And even though economic necessity was the main driving force of the progressive knowledge of nature and becomes ever more so, it would surely be pedantic to try and find economic causes for all this primitive nonsense.<sup>9</sup>

We shall leave aside the bunk and try to extract the barbarian primitive Aryan as he lived in his commune and worked in *Satra* and *Kratu* labour in common.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II pp. 448-49 (Moscow, 1949).



## CHAPTER V

### GANA-GOTRA, THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND KIN ORGANISATION OF THE ARYAN COMMUNE

WITH the discovery of fire and the taming of animals, the life of the commune became free from the daily threat of annihilation in the struggle against the forces of Nature. But the backwardness of productive forces, though daily being reduced, still imposed a life of poverty and hard labour. Whatever *Satra* labour yielded, was, therefore, for immediate consumption. Instruments of production had not yet developed to that point where individual labour got the capacity to produce a surplus, *i.e.*, something more than the barest minimum to protect life from death. Hence they had not discovered that human labour had the capacity of producing more than it consumed. The primitive commune with its technique had not realised that man's labour-power has the capacity to produce a surplus and that one could live without labour, on the surplus of the labour of another. But with the development of cattle breeding and further inventions, this condition was soon going to change. At this stage, however, there did not even arise an idea of one living on the labour of another, the productive forces just gave no ground for such a thought.

Another result of the backwardness of the instruments of production in the earliest stages was that having no surplus of production or variety of production, whatever was produced was consumed directly. There was no question of exchange of products. So the producers controlled their product, it remained with them, they did not part with it in exchange and hence had not yet developed the mysteries of the market, money and so on. The *Mahavedi*, the seat of production or collection, and the god *Agni* in the centre of the settlement with its enclosures and pastures, was all the world for the small primitive commune; life beyond was all hostile and evil.



The backwardness of the instruments of production ruled out any division of labour in the commune at this stage. Whatever little division of labour we find in *Satra* labour of the most early period, was temporary and had not evolved into a stable permanent economic interest. There was hence no *Varna* division or caste-class division in the primitive commune. The whole commune consisted of what is sometimes called the *Vishas*, the inmates of the settlement. The permanent division of labour was also ruled out by the fact that the community was yet too small for it. For division of labour in society, population must have grown sufficiently large. Hence *Satra* society or the early *Ganas* had yet no question of the castes, of the ~~three~~ or four *Varnas*, which, however, were soon to arise.

That the *Varnas* arise in Aryan society at a certain stage of its development, that it had first no such divisions, is admitted on all hands; so we need not spend time on that point. It is also admitted, and in fact it is very plain, that the *Varnas* arose as a division of labour in society. How that took place, we will see later on when we reach the stage of division of labour.

It should be noted here that between the discovery of fire and the taming of animals, Aryan society took some time. But from the taming of animals to the development of exchange, division of labour, *Varnas* and all the attendant changes in social organisation, the progress was very rapid and the Aryan commune changed very rapidly.

We have seen the primitive commune round the fire in the *Satra* labour, collectively producing and consuming. They lived and laboured somewhat like the large households we still find in some of the villages in India, without, of course, the patriarchal authority and variety of labour that we find in them. The only differentiation in labour was between men and women, the men doing hunting or fighting and breeding cattle, and the women managing the household, cooking, milking, growing corn around the settlement. The labour of both, however, was social labour, collectively done and held, and hence there was no private household and no differentiation of status between men and women.

Smallness of the community and absence of variety of labour and division of labour, exchange of products, and the division of society into classes of exploiters and exploited, rich and poor,



rendered any authoritarian organisation standing above society and ruling, ostensibly in the interests of all but actually in the interests of exploiters, unnecessary and, therefore, did not exist. There was no State, the organ of class authority, no army, no police, no taxes. Society had no need for that apparatus.

What was then the constitution of the commune in the matter of internal regulation and external defence? The ancient Hindu Aryan writers raised this question themselves and answered it.

It is a characteristic noted by *Vedic* scholars and plainly visible to any reader that the early *Vedic* literature does not pose any question regarding the internal organisation of the commune, the individual behavior of the members, their relation to the collective, faults and punishments in those relations, the force to carry out the punishments and the money, etc., necessary to maintain it. All the discussions mostly centre round the question of Creation, the origin of the universe, man and *Agni* and cattle-wealth. It is only in the later *Brahmanas* that questions of authority, ethics and behaviour arise. In the early *Vedic* literature, along with Creation, is also discussed the question of battles, wars and their outcome. And occasionally arises the only question of ethics, that of sex relations. The question of kingship and State, of ruler and the ruled, the rights and duties of individuals as such are not subject of any wrangle or discussion.

Therefore, the internal organisation of these communes, their peculiarity which distinguishes them from later Aryan society, is noted by the later writers, when these communes break down and give place to class States and new types of wars, *i.e.*, when civil wars and new questions of internal organisation—of the State force, taxes, law and morality, etc.—confront society. More than in *Vedic* literature, these are the main subjects in the Epics, especially the *Mahabharata* and the *Smritis*. From them in their comparative discourses, where they discuss the differences between the old and the new, we get to know how these early communes functioned in relation to their internal structure, which was very simple and completely answered to the stage of the productive forces of that period.

The organisation of these communes was a *Gana* organisation as is mentioned before in the *Triratna* tradition. It may be described in the words of Engels as 'a self-acting armed organisation' of the people, which had no special machine of force, the



State, to regulate its affairs, since it was not divided into contradictory antagonistic classes based on private property. Public opinion of the commune and natural necessity kept everyone to his collective social task in the commune. Any small derelictions were just corrected by public censure. A most serious crime, that of the death of a *Gana* member at the hands of another member or some such crime, was punished with exile from the *Gana*, which virtually amounted to death in those conditions of savagery. Since there was no army or bureaucracy to enforce any law, there was no taxation. The publicly elected functionary, participating in the collective labour process though not directly producing, was provided for from the collective proceeds, just as old men and children.

How was the membership of the *Gana* decided? Under the class State and modern Socialism, membership is decided by domicile and adherence to the State on a given territory. Not so in the *Gana* law. The *Gana* was not co-extensive with a territorial organisation or State. Its membership was decided by kinship or blood relationship.

The early *Vedic* society of the *Yajna* mode of production, therefore, was a *Gana* (gentile) organisation, in which all members were related by blood, in which there was collective labour and property in the very early stages, no division of classes or castes, no State, no king, no exploiters and exploited; it was a self-acting armed organisation of the people.

That is the way the Hindu texts of the later period describe the *Ganas* for us. And early *Vedic* gods and men, all lived in *Ganas*.

The rise of the State and the kingship in the later periods, and also the *Varna* divisions and civil wars, was so violently in contrast with the past that everyone wanted to know how and why they had arisen. The answers do not give us the correct reasons but they lead us to them.

In the *Mahabharata*, the old patriarch Bhishma is always asked questions regarding the past when any new practice does not square up with the traditionally known custom. The leader of the Pandavas, the victorious section in the *Mahabharata* war, which fought the Kauravas, both belonging to the same kinship, asked Bhishma a question about the origin of *kingship*: 'How is it that a mere man, just like any other man, with eyes and



hands and a mortal at that, becomes a king and can rule over men wiser and more powerful individually than him? What gives him this capacity?\*

In answer, Bhishma tells us the story of the origin of the State as he understands it. The most important statement that he makes in giving the origin of kingship or state is that there was a period when there was no State, no kingship ('Rajan' here really means State). In the *Kritayuga*, or formerly, 'there was no kingdom and no king, no punisher and no punished (no State and no exploitation). By their very law of being, the people protected each other.' 'Their derelictions were cured by public censure,' says he in another place. Describing the perils to the *Gana* organisations, he cites internal rivalry, greed (to amass property) and the break-up of their unity as the main dangers. And the characteristic of their mutual relationship he notes as 'they are alike in caste and by ancestry or blood.'\*\* If they go to war among themselves, it is the end of the *Gana* principles, one of the most important violations being that they cease to recognise the principle of blood relationship and its obligations.† All writers describing the *Gana* characteristic which is also that of *Kritayuga*, say that there men did not distinguish between 'yours and mine.' This was not merely a fiction but a reality following from the collectivism of the primitive period. In fact, Kautilya, the greatest organiser of an imperial kingdom and strong prince-dictatorship, says that

- \* समान जन्ममरणः समः सर्वैर्गुणैर्नृणाम् ।  
विशिष्ट बुद्धीन् शूरांश्च कथमेकोऽधितिष्ठति । शान्ति ५८-८  
न वै राज्यं न राजाऽसीन्न च दण्डो न दण्डकः ।  
धर्मैर्गैव प्रजाः सर्वा रक्षन्ति स्म परस्परम् ॥ ५८-१४  
श्रूयन्ते हि पुराणेषु प्रजा धिग्दण्डशासनाः ॥ ३००-८  
पाल्यमानास्तथाऽन्योऽन्यम् । ५८-१५  
पुराधिदण्ड एव आसीत् वधदण्डोऽद्य वर्तते ॥ २७३-१६  
संहत्य धर्मं चरतां पुरासीत् सुखमेव तत् ।  
तेषां नासीद्विधातन्न प्रायश्चित्तं कथंचन ॥ २७६-१२

These verses sum up the fundamental characteristics of the primitive commune in the matter of internal functioning.

\*\* जात्या च सदृशा सर्वे कुलेन सदृशास्तथा । शान्ति १०७-३०

† रक्ताश्च नाभ्यजनन्त कार्या कार्ये । शान्ति ५८-५६



in a *Gana* where *Vairajya* (described in the *Aitareya Brahmana*) exists 'nobody has a feeling of mine,' and hence he thinks—like the modern bourgeoisie in relation to Socialism—that a member of such a State will sell his government and country and no one will feel responsible for the government of the country.\* While these uprooters of primitive democracy reviled it as degenerate, they were still afraid of it as being very strong against the foe because of its internal cohesion. They contradicted themselves and, being steeped in the class outlook of the class State and private property, could not understand how the *Gana* could live. But it did and did well; and some had to admit it as Bhishma did.

That *Gana* organisation and kinship are identical is implied in the root meaning of the word *Gana* itself, which was common to the Indo-Aryans before their break-up from the original home. *Gana*, the socio-economic organisation described by the *Mahabharata* and the *Vedas* (and later on described as a kind of political organisation in the *Smriti* period) comes from the root *jan* in Sanskrit which means to beget, to produce. It has both economic and sexual meaning. The root in *jan* and *Gana* is the same as in *Yajna* which we noticed before. The Aryans, therefore, had one and the same root word for all the three meanings or relations indicating their social-economic and sex organisation. A *Yajna* mode of production was bound to be a *Gana* organisation which in turn *ipso facto* consisted of none but the kins (*jana*), that is, those who were born round the *Agni* and the *Yajna* mode of life, of men and women who together produced life and livelihood in common. Writing about this with reference to Morgan, Engels says:

The Latin word *gens*, which Morgan employs as a general designation for this body of *consanguinei*, is, like its Greek equivalent, *genos*, derived from the common Aryan root *gan* (in German, where the Aryan *g* is, according to rule, replaced

\* वैराज्यं तु जीवतः परस्याच्छिद्यं एतन्मय इति मन्यमानः

कपेयति, अपवाह्यति, पण्यं वा करोति विरक्तं वा

परित्यज्य अपगच्छति इति । अर्थशास्त्र ८-२

The '*Arajak*' or kingless State was described as one in which nobody had ownership of property—'न हि वित्तेषु प्रभुत्वं कस्यचित्तदा !' शान्ति ४८-७१



by *k*, it is *kan*), which means to beget. *Gens*, *genos*, the Sanskrit *janas*, the Gothic *kuni* (in accordance with the above-mentioned rule), the ancient Nordic and Anglo-Saxon *kyn*, the English *kin*, the Middle High German *kenne*, all equally signify kinship, descent. However, *gens* in the Latin and *genos* in the Greek [and, I add, *Gana-Gotra* in Sanskrit—S.A.D.] are specially used for those bodies of *consanguinei* which boast of a common descent (in this case from a common male ancestor) and which, through certain social and religious institutions, are linked together into a special community...<sup>1</sup>

That the earliest organisation of the Aryans was based on kinship, and that it was the foundation of all subsequent 'nations', is persistently indicated by them in various ways. The famous ten tribes that spread over almost one-half of India and beyond are stated to be kins. The five tribes of Yadu, Turvasu, Druhyu, Anu and Puru are shown as sons of one father Yayati from his two wives Devayani and Sharmistha. The five tribes of Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Pundra and Sumha of east and south-east India are said to be sons of Bali, produced on his wife by one blind sage Deerghatamas. The point emphasised is that these people with their socio-economic relations were also kin relations.

*The ĠANA constitution is thus the people's organisation under primitive collectivism, where production relationship was at the same time kinship.*

This is illustrated for us even in the names of the most fundamental blood relationships. Kin relation and economic functional relation in the activities of the commune are identical in the name of mother, daughter, father, husband and wife.

Mother (*Ma-tru*) was one whose function it was to measure out (root: *Ma*, to measure and distribute food, flesh, etc., to all, and one who gave birth to the children, i.e., one who gave more life. Through food and mother, the commune, the *Brahman*, reproduced itself and lived. Father (*Pi-pa-tru*) was one whose function it was to hunt, to be on the look-out for protection (root: *Pa*, to protect). Daughter, (*Duhi-tru*) had to do the milking of the cattle (root: *Duh*, to milk), the most important part of the food-supply work by the side of the mother. The sex relations of *Pati* and *Patni*, who in turn become the father and mother,

<sup>1</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, etc., p. 140.



also denote the function of putting together and building a settlement. The word is derived from *Stayi*, which means to put together, to assemble. What?—of course the settlement, and later on the house or individual family.\* *Pastryu*, *Stree* and *Patni* all meant the males and females, who assembled the commune. The word was found perhaps even before the Aryan man decided to find different words for the male and female in their sex roles as distinguished from the social-economic roles. Hence the word *Grihapati*, before the rise of the private household, denoted both the male and female (*Grihapati-Stree*—says Panini).

In later epochs, economic role and relationship ceased to be governed by kinship. When the primitive commune broke down, father and mother were so, though they may not build the house or protect or measure food. The feudal landlord, the capitalist house-owner, the police took over these functions, while mother and daughter, father and son were cast wide in the world in fields and factories to find their food and *pastyam* as they could and seldom getting it in spite of hard labour and abundance of products!

Another name for the organisational basis of the Aryan collective was the *Gotra*. While the name *Gana* based itself on the act of production and producers (*Jana*), the name *Gotra* based itself on the production of the main source of wealth and food, namely, cattle (Sanskrit *Go*). While, here again, it has the basic economic content, the *Gotra* organism and the relationship connoted by it survived among the Hindus mainly as a basis of sex or family relationship and has been a subject of controversy among Hindu scholars. The Hindu law of marriage prohibits marriage between persons of the same *Gotra*. All *Gotras* are united and classified under nine main divisions called *Pravaras*. (Marriage amongst same *Pravaras*, however, is not specifically prohibited, according to some scholars.) *Vedic* scholars note, however, that this prohibition of marriage within same *Gotra* is not to be found in the *Vedas* or in early history. It arose much later. But they are unable to tell us why. The task is given up by them as hopeless. The *Gotra-Pravara* confusion is insoluble to them.

The Aryan *Gana-Jana* and *Gotra* were, however, one and the

\* अपस्त्यायते संघाती भवति पस्त्यम्



same thing and were the basis of their economic and marriage relationship. *Gana* economy was of kin members, and kins had common collective economy. Everything beyond the commune or *Gana* was hostile and inimical. A non-kin was an enemy and hence could not be in the commune and could not join in the *Yajna* mode. One who is not in the *Yajna* is a foreigner to be annihilated and his wealth to be captured and appropriated. One could not have kins in the enemy. The *Gotra* alone was one and all. Hence, to produce life and livelihood, the *Gotra* was the foundation and the limit. Hence, marriage had to be in the *Gotra*. The *Yajna* community of the primitive Aryans could not think at first of marrying outside the *Gotra*, away from one's own fire—the *Agni*. The Aryan, both in his conditions of savagery and barbarism, had to learn by experience of hundreds of years of life and observation to see that inbreeding or consanguinity was harmful to the growth of the *Gotra* and to invent *incest* as its solution. The conceptions of our present-day prohibitions of kin-marriages have grown only through thousands of years of history. The Aryan in his primitivism married within his *Gotra* and then in later history prohibited it, when he grew and expanded in numbers, in area, in knowledge, in economy.

*Gana-Gotra*, or kinship and economic relationship, raises the question of sex relationship, i.e., the question of marriage in the primitive commune. And in this also the extreme primitiveness of the productive forces determined the sex relations of the members of the early Aryan society. The ethics and morality of *Yajna* society in this respect were quite different from that of later Hindu societies, from that of our age or that of modern Socialist society.



## CHAPTER VI

### PRIMITIVE COMMUNE MARRIAGE

THE discussion of the development of the institution of marriage as we find it in bourgeois society today and the morality and ethics by which the bourgeoisie swears day and night but never observes, has always roused heated controversies in every country. Questions of divorce, polygamy, and monogamy, 'property marriage' and love marriage, and such other questions are raising storm in the rapidly changing Indian society and forcing the intelligentsia to look at the relations between man and woman as having two aspects—one the social, as man and woman, as social units; and the other, the natural, as male and female. Historians of the institution of marriage have tried to derive monogamy, polygamy or polyandry by resorting to comparing man's sex relations with those found in some species of animals such as the apes or the deer, etc., etc. Such attempts are totally ridiculous inasmuch as no animal has ever formed a social organisation (a herd is not a society). And man is not just an animal, because of the very fact that through his progressive control over Nature's forces, by means of developing his instruments of production, he lifts himself out of the animal world, becomes man and builds human society. Hence, man's sex relations as between male and female are from the very beginning conditioned by society—they are at one and the same time natural sex relations and social relations.

As both Nature and man are changing and developing, they have a history. They are not static given things, immutable for all time. Hence they have to be viewed historically. Which means that ethics and morality in the matter of relations between man and woman are not determined by God or mere nature, are not the same for all epochs, but are changing and developing, from a lower plane to a higher plane.



That these relations are not the same for all societies and not the same for all time even in the same society is also being conceded by the bourgeois intelligentsia. But they differ and argue violently when one comes to find the law that governs the change and to determine what is the higher phase and the lower. Like all ruling classes, the bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia in India hold the extant relation as always the highest and the best.

When, therefore, in our research into history, we come to this phase of Aryan social life and history, we step into a field which raises even greater storm than the question of property. When the subject was first studied in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century and historians found various forms of marriage in various tribal societies, and remnants of those forms in certain contemporary 'customs, they dismissed them as peculiar notions or accidents of backward people. When Bachofen proved that matriarchy arose from 'group-marriage' in ancient society and was at the origin of every social group, people protested; when Morgan, Marx and Engels developed the theory of the origin of family, on the basis of historical materialism, as the reflex of the socio-economic relations of man, the theory that each social epoch of man's mode of production determines the form of family, bourgeois Europe maligned Marxism as advocating 'nationalisation' of women. Some sections of the Indian bourgeois intelligentsia have attempted that calumny here too. But one can only say that it is a perfectly natural conclusion only for the bourgeoisie, which considers woman also a property. The working class laughs at such conclusions.

The bourgeois Hindu intelligentsia and the orthodoxy of his society should be the last to fling a stone at Marxism, because the very gods whom he is asked to revere daily, have had anything but 'moral' sex relations, from the point of view of what is held moral today. Hindu 'sacred' history records every form of marriage or sex relations among its gods and heroes, which is abhorred by social ethics of the modern Indian. In short, the subject must be treated historically, in order to help us to go to a higher form of social organisation, which will be neither like the primitive commune of the barbaric age nor like the class slavery of the bourgeois civilisation.

The ancient Hindu writers themselves, being nearer to the reality of that age and less interested in putting a false veneer



on the social-class relations of their age or the memories of the past, did not try to hide inconvenient facts either in matters of property relations or sex relations. They admit that sex relations of their society were totally different from those of earlier society. According to their usual way, they say that the four *Yugas* had four different sex relations 'to generate progeny,' just as they had different socio-economic relations 'to generate wealth.' The great patriarch Bhishma characterises the sex relations of the four *Yugas* by four names as those of *Samkalpa*, *Samsparsha*, *Maithuna* and *Dwandwa*, as valid for the *Yugas* of *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dwapar* and *Kali*, respectively.\* Having recourse to our knowledge of the development of marriage among ancient tribal people even now existing, we can identify these four stages. *Samkalpa* relations are those of complete promiscuity, relations taking place between those who just wish it, with no social or personal barriers laid down. *Samsparsha* are those when relations between the most near relatives were banned, marriage between same *Gotra* members was interdicted and different *Gotras* married in *Gotra*-group way. *Maithuna* is the last stage of the natural marriage. It is the end of the group marriage, the pairing family enduring till the pair desired to the exclusion of others. *Dwandwa* is the monogamous pair of the *Kali* age, where the woman is subject to man, who stands in contradiction to her on the strength of his rights of private property and the monopoly of it.

That the extant marriage form is not ancient, has arisen as a stage in evolution and is of recent growth, is admitted in all the traditional literature of the Hindus. When Pandu, the sick king, asked Kunti and Madri, his wives, to lie with others in order to get children, he gave the unwilling Kunti a long lecture on the ancient practice when exclusive monogamous married

\* कृतयुगे—

न चैषां मैथुनो धर्मो बभूव भरतर्षभ ।

संकल्पादेव चैतेषां गर्भः समुत्पद्यते ॥ शान्ति २०६-४२

ततस्त्रेता युगे काले संस्पर्शाज्जायते प्रजा ।

न बभूव मैथुनो धर्मस्तेषामपि जनाधिप ॥ ४३

द्वापरे मैथुनो धर्मः प्रजानामभवन्तृप ।

तथा कलियुगे राजन्दन्दमापेदिरे जनाः ॥ १६



pairs did not exist.\* When Surya went to Kunti, in her girlhood, when she showed the old urge of free and natural love, but just hesitated at the consequences in a world that was fast changing and humming with new values, Surya set her doubts at rest by quoting again ancient practice. Bhishma's mother did the same thing when his brother died childless and she wanted her daughter-in-law to produce children by levirate with other men in order to inherit property and the kingdom. Though the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* and the *Vedas* runs a consistent recurring note that marriage and family of the *Kali* age—of the woman bound down in monogamous marriage, monogamous for her only, with the children being known after the father and not mother, as of old, and a family founded on such marriage—is quite a new thing, a new social invention to meet certain needs and that it is not natural.<sup>1</sup>

Then what was the ancient social-natural relation and family? Aryan man, like all savage people, took a long time to observe the effects of conditions of promiscuity or inbreeding. The small social group of men and women, holding together against wild Nature, worked and lived collectively and bred within itself. As in economy, so in sex, he remained a savage, half man, half animal, growing out of Nature and against her, trying to understand her and overcome her. The undesirability of relations between the male and female when they happen to be son and mother, father and daughter or brother and sister, had not yet been seen by him. Hence these relations, which are now held as a crime of *incest*, were not prohibited. Remnants of these

\* अथत्विदं प्रवक्ष्यामि धर्मतत्त्व निबोध मे ।  
 पुराणैर्दृष्टं धर्मं द्विर्महात्मभिः ॥  
 अनावृताः किल पुरा स्त्रिय आसन्वरानने ।  
 कामचारविहारिण्य स्वतंत्र्याश्चारुहासिनी ।  
 तासां व्यूच्चरमाणानां कौमारात्सुभगे पतीन् ।  
 नाधर्मोऽभूद् वरारोहे सहि धर्मः पुराऽभवत् ॥  
 तं चैव धर्मं पौराणं तिर्यग्योनिर्गतताः प्रजाः ।  
 अप्याप्यनुविधीयन्ते कामक्रोधविवर्जिताः ॥  
 प्रमाणादृष्टधर्मोऽयं पूज्यते च महर्षिभिः ।  
 उत्तरेषु च रम्भोरु कुरुष्वद्यापि पूज्यते ॥ आदि १२८

<sup>1</sup> There are many such references scattered throughout the *Mahabharata*.



in social customs today are not available anywhere, but Aryan mythology shows the existence of such a stage when it mentions the birth and growth of several of their gods, their *Prajapatis* and Creation; and these examples are not treated with horror but are simply explained away by saying that they were permissible because they pertained to gods.

The *Aitareya Brahmanā*, when it began to explain Creation, tells us that *Prajapati*, the original Creator, married his daughter for this purpose.\* The *Matsya* and *Vayu Puranas* speak the same thing of *Brahma*, the Creator. When later on such relations were banned, *Prajapati* seems to have persisted but had to be cautious. So he took the disguise of a deer and went to his daughter, *Dyaus*, who also had taken the same disguise of a *rohita* deer. But the gods seem to have been very vigilant and before *Prajapati* could carry out the deed, he was shot through by an arrow. The *Rigveda* did not feel very indignant about it and assures us that both the sinners found place in the heavens as stars of the group known as 'Hunters' (*Aitareya Brahmana*, 3-33; 5-32). Even if this is to be explained away as an allegory to describe astronomical phenomena, there was no reason to resort to this imagery or ideology unless it was actually present in the minds of men as a reflex of actual facts of life.

The *Harivamsha* also mentions famous cases of this type. *Shatarupa*, daughter of *Vishishtha Prajapati*, when of age became his wife (ch. 2). *Manu* married his daughter, *Ila* (ch. 10), and *Jahnu*, his daughter, *Jahnavi-Ganga* (ch. 27). The *Harivamsha* goes on recording still more complicated cases. Here ten *Prachetas* were brothers, who had a son, *Soma*. *Soma* had a daughter called *Marisha*. All the ten brothers and *Soma* together got a son, *Dakshaprajapati*, on *Marisha*. This *Daksha* later got twenty-seven daughters, whom he gave to *Soma*, his father, for the creation of progeny. *Daksha* is also shown to be a son of *Brahma*, who gave his daughter to the grandfather and the result was the famous *Narada*.

When history of this type was being retailed out of social memory by the ancient writers like *Vyasa* and *Vaishampayana* to *Janamejaya*, the king, he was surprised and asked them how it could be possible. The astounded *Janamejaya* was coolly

\* प्रजापतिर्वै स्वाम् दुहितरमभ्यायत् ।



informed that it was true history ('*Puratan Itihas*'—MBH) and that was the *Dharma*, the mode of social organisation of remote antiquity, and hence was possible then.

Such an organism knew no differentiated kins, entailing defined sex interdictions. But this promiscuity was found to be injurious to the growth of the progeny. Hence the first prohibition that was thought of and applied was to sexual relations between parents and offsprings and brought into existence the consanguine family. Here the marriage groups are ranged by generations : all grandfathers and grandmothers are all mutual husbands and wives; equally their children, the fathers and mothers; in this, brother and sister, male and female cousins are mutually husbands and wives.<sup>2</sup>

The second stage was the creation of a barrier between brother and sister. This progress was much more difficult because of the greater equality of ages of the parties concerned. It was accomplished gradually, beginning with the natural sister on the mother's side. How difficult it was can be seen from the fact that late in the *Rigveda*, Yami, the sister of Yama, asks for his love and progeny of her but he refuses, saying that the great watchman of the gods, Varuna, would see and be angry. Yami argues that on the contrary the gods would approve of it.\* The end of this drama in the *Rigveda* is lost but even if the conclusion is presumed that Yama ultimately refused, it points to the difficulty with which the earlier custom was fought out.

The *Taittiriya Brahmana* relates how Sita-Savitri, the daughter of *Prajapati*, wanted the love of her brother Soma, who, however, did not want her but his other sister Shraddha. She asked the father's advice, who gave her an amulet and she succeeded in winning Soma.<sup>3</sup> The *Adi Parva* of the *Mahabharata* and the *Harivamsha*, while discussing the origin of family—from the *Brahman*, says that Daksha, son of Brahma born of his right toe, married Daksha, born of his left toe, that means his sister. They got sixty daughters. Daksha had two brothers, Marichi and Dharma. Dharma married ten of his brother's daughters. Marichi's son Kashyapa married Daksha's thirteen daughters, his

<sup>2</sup> Engles, *The Origin of the Family*, etc., pp. 61ff.

\* उशन्ति चा ते अमृतं स एतत् ।

<sup>3</sup> *Taittiriya Brahmana*, 3-10, 9-4.



cousin-sisters. For the same reasons of inbreeding, these relations also were ruled out. This second barrier of interdictions gave birth to the organisation known as *Gana-Gotra* in which the members cannot marry each other but had to seek their husbands and brides outside it. Where formerly kin marriage was the rule,<sup>4</sup> now it became prohibited. Thus *Sagotra* marriage was ruled out. The *Gotra* is that sex organism of the primitive commune in which all husbands and wives are common to each other, *i.e.*, there is group-marriage, but the husbands can no longer be kins or blood relations of the wives. Hence the husbands and wives must belong to different unrelated groups, *i.e.*, *Gotras*. The rigid tie between the *Gotra* and marriage in ancient Hindu society at a certain stage presupposes its foundation on group-marriage but in such a way that blood-kins do not marry. *Asagotra* marriage was the solution of the problem. With the end of group marriage and the coming of monogamy, the *Gotra* procedure becomes meaningless and hence soon loses its place in Hindu marriage though orthodoxy tries to stick to it as a matter of ritual and custom.

Though marriage had to be between non-kins, *i.e.*, between dissimilar *Gotras*, yet it had to be within the same nation, the same people. How did the small social group of primitive economy, which at the beginning had perforce to be kins and near kins at that, solve the problem?

Every primeval family had to split up after a couple of generations, at the latest. The original communistic common household, which prevailed without exception until the late middle stage of barbarism, determined a certain maximum size of the family community, varying according to circumstances but fairly definite in each locality. As soon as the conception of the impropriety of sexual intercourse between the children of a common mother arose, it was bound to have an effect upon such divisions of the old and the foundation of new household communities. . . . One or more groups of

<sup>4</sup> The prohibition of consanguine group-marriage and also pairing family is ascribed in the *Mahabharata* to Swetaketu, son of Uddalaka. The man who pairs with Uddalaka's wife, with his consent, claims his right because the woman belongs to his *Gotra*. He says :

प्रजारणिस्तु पत्नी ते कुलशीलसमन्विता ।

सृष्टरी मम गोत्रेण ब्रह्मण्यां क्षमस्व मे ॥ आदि १२८-२९



sisters became the nucleus of one household, their natural brothers the nucleus of the other.<sup>5</sup>

Their sisters were the mutual wives of their mutual husbands, but these husbands now were not their natural brothers. In such a group-marriage, the mother only could be the known or identifiable parent and she by her position in the *Yajna* economy dominated the household; hence descent was in the mother line. So the sisters' children continued to be the inheritors of the *Gana-Gotra*, while the brothers had to migrate, go to the gens where their wives were found. Collective or communistic household and group-marriage was the foundation of matriarchy. That is the origin of all societies and so was it to the Aryan also.

Foundation of *Gana-Gotra* by sisters is found in the story where the sixty sisters, who were daughters of Daksha, form into seven groups of 10, 13, 27, 3, 2, 2, 2. and take seven *Prajapati* husbands and begin the creation of the world. *Gotra* family names, after their women founders, are not uncommon in the genealogies of the *Rishis*, though their male names mostly have been handed down to posterity.

This form of marriage and lineage revolts against present-day conceptions of family organisation and marriage. So the bourgeois scholars in India as well as in Europe have stubbornly refused to admit its existence. But historical facts surviving even till a late period in the form of custom have unfortunately betrayed these scholars. That the offsprings of such a family were considered the progeny of the commune along with that of the mother was quite natural to that society. Hence children had *Gotra* names first and then their individual names and they were known as *Gotra-apatyas*, the children of the gens. When matriarchy was overthrown and lineage through father in the monogamian family came, the direct child of the parent was known as *Anantarapatya*. Naturally, the gentile organisation had no such thing as an illegitimate child, an object of contempt and an abandoned denizen of the street.

Matriarchy has survived in India with great persistence and polyandry of the Pandavas and Draupadi is no mere fiction but has its survivals in some of the castes in India to-day staring in

<sup>5</sup> *The Origin of the Family, etc.*, pp. 64-65.



our face. They prove the existence of group-marriage in primitive Aryan community with such force that historians have been at a loss to hide or explain the phenomenon otherwise. They feel ashamed to acknowledge it because they want to judge and recast primitive society of their holy gods and forefathers exactly according to the legal code of their patriarchal slavery. In such matters, history is better helped by the superstitious *Puranas* which have preserved some of the facts for us. And these facts find their correct meaning only through the historical materialism of **Marx**, which explains why it had to be so before, cannot be so now, nor will it be so in the future Communism too, where the respect and freedom of the woman will be restored on a new higher level.

The attempt to suppress the matriarchal origin of early society was made not only by modern scholars but even by the ancient writers of patriarchy. Mother right and collective property of the primitive commune were overthrown so far back in remote history that its historical record is not obtainable, except in the form of survivals in custom and tradition. Vyasa, writing in the epoch of patriarchy, when descent from mother had been overthrown, sought to begin world history with *Prajapati* patriarchs. But he failed. The founder *Prajapatis* with their progeny had all to be named by their mothers. In spite of the male historian and his society which had now subjected the woman into slavery, the woman broke through the barriers and asserted her proud primeval position. (For easy reference we give the eighteen names of the common mothers and their matriarchal gens, with whose battles, expansion and feuds, the whole of early primeval history of the *Adi Parva* of *Mahabharata* and the *Vedas* is full, in the Appendix.)

The splitting of the *Gana-Gotra* and the founding of a new one is described in the *Somayaga* ceremony. It puts the female god, i.e., the ancient matriarch, Aditi, in the centre of the first ceremony which is made to show the first resolve of separation (the *Prayaneeyeshti*), the resolve being aided by five deities, called Pathya-Swasti, Agni, Soma, Savita and Aditi. The first is the goddess of welfare of journey; the second is the fire taken from the original household which is to found the new one; Soma, the god of provisions and food; Savita, the sun and time. These four stand in four corners of the marching gens, while



Aditi, the primeval mother-founder and leader, stands in the centre of them. Aditi alone gets special *Havanas* of *ghee* and rice (in this *Yajna* ceremony) while others are asked to be content with parched corn (*Ajya*). Turn the history of family as you will, with the aid of pedantic bourgeois lawyers like McLennan and his followers, to assist the case of patriarchs, you cannot escape the conclusion of matriarchy as the founder and maker of the early society.

A certain stable pairing for a longer or shorter period took place even under the group or *Gotra* marriage. A man has his principal wife among many women and he was to her the principal husband among others. Such habitual pairing became more and more established as the *Gana-Gotra* developed and the greater became the restrictions on marriageable relatives, making group marriages more and more impossible. They were supplanted by the *pairing family*. At this stage one man lives with one woman, yet in such a manner that polygamy and occasional infidelity remain privileges of men. The marriage tie can be easily dissolved by either party and the children belong to the mother alone as formerly.

Examples of the pairing family in Aryan life are well known and the *Gandharva* form of marriage, recognised by later Hindu *Smriti* Law, is a proof of it. The 'holy practice' of Vishwamitra-Menaka, of Dushyanta-Shakuntala, is too well known to be recalled in detail. *Rishi* Jaratkaru had a pairing family with the Nagi Jaratkaru of Vasuki *Gotra*, from which Kashyapa was born, who saved the Nagas in their war with Janamejaya and others. The famous Pandava brothers broke all records by resorting to almost every form of marriage and family. They showed the remnant of group marriage in polyandry—five natural brothers having one common principal wife, Draupadi; and she, too, was an offspring of the same type of union inasmuch as the *Mahabharata* says that she was born not in the natural way but on the *Vedi* out of the *Agni* fire\* along with a brother, to her father, who did some *Yajna* for it. The polyandry of Draupadi was not an exception, as can be seen from the fact that it still obtains in some parts of India.<sup>6</sup> Having Draupadi

\* कुमांगी चापि पाञ्चाली वेदी मध्यात्समुत्थिता । आदि १८१-४५

<sup>6</sup> While speaking about polyandry, Engels mentions India and Tibet and says that 'the certainly not uninteresting origin' of which



as the principal wife, each Pandava had other wives too. Hidimba had a pairing family with Bhima, till Ghatotkacha was born. Chitrangada had Arjuna until a son was born to her. In all these cases it is to be noted that the sons remained with the mothers, who were freed from their husbands after a certain period.<sup>7</sup>

In this ever widening exclusion of blood-relatives from marriage, natural selection also continues to have its effect. In Morgan's words, marriage between non-consanguineous gentes 'tended to create a more vigorous stock physically and mentally.... When two advancing tribes.... are.... blended into one people.... the new skull and brain would widen and lengthen to the sum of the capabilities of both.' Tribes constituted according to gentes were bound, therefore, to gain the upper hand over the more backward ones, or carry them along by force of their example.

Thus, the evolution of the family in prehistoric times consisted in the continual narrowing of the circle—originally embracing the whole tribe—within which marital community between the two sexes prevailed. By the successive exclusion, first of closer, then of ever remoter relatives, and finally even of those merely related by marriage; every kind of group marriage was ultimately rendered practically impossible; and in the end there remained only the one, for the moment still loosely united, couple, the molecule, with the dissolution of

from group marriage requires closer investigation. In its practice, at any rate, it appears to be much more tolerable than the jealous harem establishments of the Mohammedans. At least, among the Nairs in India, the men, in groups of three, four or more, have to be sure, one wife in common but each of them can simultaneously have a second wife in common with three or more other men, and in the same way, a third wife, a fourth and so on. It is a wonder that McLennan did not discover a new class—that of *club marriage*—in these marriage clubs, membership of several of which at a time was open to the men, and which he himself described. This marriage club business, however, is by no means real polyandry; on the contrary, as has been noted by Giraud-Teulon, it is a specialised form of group marriage, the men living in polygamy, the women in polyandry.' (*The Origin of the Family, etc.*, pp. 101-102)

<sup>7</sup> The fact that Draupadi had to endure this violation of polyandrous loyalty by her husbands was because the group marriage as such was fast vanishing along with primitive collectivism and hence woman had ceased to have her former freedom which accrued to her through her social collective labour, whose products could not be man's private property. That is why Draupadi could be pawned to the Kauravas and sold.



which marriage itself completely ceases. This fact alone shows how little individual sex love, in the modern sense of the word, had to do with the origin of monogamy. The practice of all peoples in this stage affords still further proof of this. Whereas under previous forms of the family men were never in want of women but, on the contrary, had a surfeit of them, women now became scarce and were sought after. Consequently, with pairing marriage begins the abduction and purchase of women—widespread *symptoms*, but nothing more, of a much more deeply-rooted change that had set in.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest traditions of the *Vedic* lore cannot be *expected* to mention such practices but we see several of them in the Epic period. Abduction of Rukmini by Krishna, of Subhadra by Arjuna, of Usha by Aniruddha, of Prabhavati (daughter of Vajranabha, brother of Nikumbha) by Pradyumna, of Bhanumati by Nikumbha, are the noted of them. The same stage invented the *Paishachi* marriage as also the famous *Swayamvara* system and drew many an enterprising youth in search of brave deed and a bride, who too had her choice of the best in the land!

As Engels says, 'the pairing family is the form of the family characteristic of barbarism in the same way as group marriage is characteristic of savagery and monogamy of civilisation.'

For the further development of this pairing marriage or family into stable monogamy, as we know it—*i.e.*, with the supremacy of the man over the woman, in which monogamy is only for the woman—quite a new element had to appear in society, that of private property. In the pairing family, the group was already reduced to its last unit, its two atom molecule—to one man and one woman. Natural selection had completed its work by constantly reducing the circle of community marriage. Nothing remained to be done in this direction. Unless new social forces, those of private property, father-right and class State entered society, there was no reason for a new form of family to develop out of the pairing family, which, however, was just the historically developed point from which alone monogamy with private property could arise, on the ruins of collectivism and the commune of the barbarian epoch.

Here, we may, for convenience, anticipate later development of the Aryan nation and say that monogamian family is

<sup>8</sup> *The Origin of the Family, etc.*, pp. 78-79.



the first form of family based exclusively 'on economic conditions, namely, on the victory of private property over original, naturally developed, common ownership. The rule of the man in the family, procreation of children who could only be his, destined to be the heirs of his wealth' (Engels). These were the exclusive aims of the monogamy of class-ridden society (monogamy of classless society of the future being totally different). This frank and ruthless meaning of monogamy was not hidden by the Aryan law-givers and writers to whom the feelings or chastity of a wife did not matter, provided the man could have a son to inherit, by whomsoever possible, if he himself failed in that aim. For that, therefore, resorted to *Niyoga* (levirate) to strangers, to hired Brahmins, to forest *Rishis* and dwellers, and every other conceivable agent. Vyasa had the wives of Vichitravirya, without which 'the great and ideal' Pandavas would not have seen history. Deerghatamas had the wives of Bali, some Brahmin passerby on the road had the wife of Sharadandayana. The *Rishis* had Pandu's wives, though in the later story, the poor\* gods in heaven are invoked to shelter the part of the earthly *Rishis*. The Aryan law-givers of the age of private property, that is, of the *Kali* age, being yet too near the recent reality of pairing family of the *Gana* society, were frank enough to lay down the aim of monogamy for the new class-society. Manu, the law-giver of class society, of the *Kali* age, replacing the *Dharma* of collectivism and the *Maithuna* pairing family of the *Dwapara* age, says that man must strive to protect woman in order to have progeny that can be *attested* (hence pure).\* That woman is a mere instrument for breeding children is an idea of the age of slavery and private property and class rule. The primitive commune no doubt knew her as one who gave birth to children, but they knew her as their great mother, as one who also owned all social wealth along with man, who was the leader and founder of the commune. She was neither mere sex (as in the hired-companion marriages of the modern decadent bourgeoisie) nor mere chattel along with cattle to produce progeny.\*\* In the new monogamy, chastity

\* प्रजाविशुद्ध्यर्थम् स्त्रियम् रक्षेत् प्रयत्नतः । मनु १३-६-६

\*\* प्रजननार्थम् महाभागाः पूजाही गृहदीप्तयः । मनु २३-६-२६

पुत्रार्थे क्रियते भार्या पुत्रः षिण्डप्रयोजनम् ॥ मनु



was easily restored, as *Yajnavalkya* says, in cases of adultery, after the monthly bath or after delivery of the child.\* Sure inheritance of property was the divine aim, henceforth, in marriage; wife became cattle, the *Arsha* marriage paid a cow and a bull (*Gomithunam*) as her price and Sanskrit grammar fixed the new values in the *Samasa* illustration of *Samahara-dwandwa* by the term '*Daragavam*'—wife and cattle together on the same plane. This was impossible so long as the collective mode of production, with the right of woman to social property, was dominant in society.

'The communistic household, in which most of the women or even all the women belong to one and the same gens, while the men come from various other gentes (*Gotras*), is the material foundation of that predominancy of women which generally obtained in primitive times' (Engels). Such a household was possible only on the basis of collective ownership of the instruments of production and the product in which woman's labour was as important a part of social labour as man's. The man went to war, hunted, fished, provided the raw material for food and the tools necessary for these pursuits. The woman built and cared for the house and prepared food and clothing for the commune. Each sex also owned collectively the tools made and used by it; the men, owners of hunting and warring weapons (and later cattle), the women of household goods. The two together meant the *Brahman*, the commune, a figurative recollection of which remained in the *Ardha-nari-nateswar*. There was no production and rival machinery apart from that of the *Gana-Gotra*, in which the woman had not a hand. The *Gana-Gotra* arose from her, its kinships were constituted through her. When the commune grew and threw out more *Gana-Gotras*, she it was who led them, the great representative of the primeval *Aditi*, reappearing elsewhere as *Kali-ma*. Neither the councils of war nor food, for which was fought the war, could be held

\* व्यभिचारात् ऋतौ शुद्धिः गर्भे त्यागो विधीयते । याज्ञवल्क्य १-७२

Says Engels: 'It (the monogamian family) is based on the supremacy of the man; its express aim is the begetting of children of undisputed paternity, this paternity being required in order that these children may in due time inherit their father's wealth as his natural heirs.' (*The Origin of the Family*, etc., p. 102).

See *Anushasana Parva*, Ch. 45, 9, in the *Mahabharat*.



without her. No wonder she was clothed with the attributes of godhood by ancient man, and extant female deities in Hindu myths, bearing witness to the position of women, still tell us the stories of that epoch, now past with the fall of the *Yajna* mode of production and *Brahman*. The *Taittiriya Brahmana* (1.1.4.) does not hesitate to make woman the originator of the great *Yajna* mode, which was known to gods, the *Asuras* and Manu, the man. Ila, the daughter and wife of Manu, went and saw how the gods and *Asuras* did it. She found that theirs was a defective method and so also Manu's. She came to Manu and told him to follow a new method of hers, which would yield greater results. Manu told her to re-lay the *Yajna* fire, as she desired. The result was that Manu, the man, got abundance of *Praja* and *Pashu*, of progeny and cattle.

That was the way the primitive commune organised its production, its *Gana-Gotra* family and marriage, and lived its life, though of comparative poverty, yet free from internal strife and fratricidal or civil wars. The *Brahman* multiplied, spread over the world from place to place and fought against those who came in its way or attacked it.

It had no *civil* wars but it had to fight its *tribal* wars. We shall, therefore, now see how the growing *Gana* organised its war and war-begotten wealth and how with the growing productivity of labour and exchange, it broke down from classlessness to a class State, to private property and a new mode of production, from savagery and barbarism to civilisation, from *Krita-Treta* age to *Dwapar-Kali*.



## CHAPTER VII

### ORGANISATION OF TRIBAL WARS AND WAR-WEALTH. ASHWA MEDHA, PURUSHA MEDHA AND DANAM

WE have seen so far the economic and kin organisation of the *Gana* commune. We shall now see how the *Gana-Gotra* migrated, when economic and kin laws necessitated a part of the *Gana* to split and found new communes. One more very vital aspect of the life of the *Ganas* are the wars that they had to fight against the hostile tribes around them. The organisation of war and the wealth captured therein is a very important factor in the life of the developing Aryan *Ganas*. We shall see how it is done, again from the same source, namely the *Yajna*.

When the population grew, the weak primitive organisation could not hold large groups together as is possible today. The *Gana-Gotra* split and spread over the whole continent of Asia, seizing spaces where they were empty, and battling for them where they were not. Migrations of the *Gotra* children due to economic necessity and the ban on consanguine marriage, referred to in the last chapter, are distinctly recorded and their procedure also laid down in Aryan *Yajna* ritual.

In the *Gotra* of Asikni, according to the *Harivamsha*, they had five thousand children, that is, the common offsprings of the commune. These in turn were going to have children and hence an economic crisis threatened the commune. Narada, who in Hindu mythology is habitually sent out to smooth over crises and quarrels by advice of compromising or promoting fights, appears and warns the children that unless they migrate and bring up new communes, there would be poverty and crisis as there was not enough food and productive resources for such a big growth. Accordingly, the gens split and a part migrated never to return. Daksha *Prajapati* produced on Asikni one thousand more children, who again had to be disposed of in the same way.



This search for new homes and founding of new gens could not be a simple peaceful affair. The physical face of the earth had yet to be cleared up of innumerable obstacles for the development of man, whose resources though growing were not yet equal to the task. From land to land the Aryans had to roam to find suitable homelands. One such obstacle surviving in the pre-historic memories of man is the floods of torrential rivers, etc., which are a common inheritance in the mythology of all peoples. Manu's civilisation was wiped out by floods but he was saved by a fish and is reported to have landed somewhere in the Himalayas to begin the creation again. So are the floods of the Biblical record, the Noah's Ark, etc. *Vendidad, Fargard II* (c. 3,000 B.C.) mentions sixteen lands in which the tribes settled and from which they had to migrate for a variety of reasons, apart from the necessity of sending out growing population. The *Vendidad*, the *Vedas* of the Parsees, says: 'Angra Mainyu sent the flood. Ahur Mazda called Yima ruler of Airyana Vaejo and warned him. Yima made people happy by thrice enlarging the boundaries of the country, which had become too narrow for the inhabitants. Ahur Mazda created sixteen lands and one by one Angra Mainyu plagued them.'<sup>1</sup> We are not concerned here with the details of these migrations, we are only concerned to see how growing material resources created new problems and how society solved them.

It would not be uninteresting to see the procedure of the march of these growing and splitting *Gana-Gotras*. This can be seen again in the same *Agnistoma* and *Shadratra Kratu*, which we have noticed before. *Agnistoma Somayaga*, which is a very long *Yajna*, has been interpreted and explained as a migration procedure of the Aryans by Kunte in his *Vicissitudes of Aryan Civilisation*, but we think it is not wholly a migration procedure but also includes the actions of the daily life of the Aryan commune.

The season to begin the migration chosen is spring—the season for breeding of cattle and blossoming of fruits and flowers, and the starting-day either the fullmoon day or the *Amavasya*, the full black night about to break into the moon period. The leaders of the commune, the *Ritvijas*, assemble round the com-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *Arctic Home in the Vedas*.



mon fire and there it is decided who is to go and in what groups. Those who choose and are chosen are given the *Deeksha*. They are provided with new clothes and taken through a ceremony imitating their new birth as children of the new *Gana*. They get all the provisions for the new home—pots, pans, cattle, goats, wine, corn, carts carrying camping equipments, etc. One cart carries the fire from the original home to become the founder of the new. The migration is an occasion for a great feast. The whole commune dines, drinks and revels. Those who depart take vows of cooperation and sinlessness and the whole caravan leaves, armed to the teeth, against the *Rakshasa* enemies and wild beasts.

How long would they march and when would they call a halt? We may get some idea of this if we take the help of the *Shadratra Kratu* or *Saraswat Satra*. In the absence of the world territory being privately appropriated and bounded by States, there was no definite land mass to which they were driving in a planned manner. Hence to the new *Gana*, the direction, distance and area were decided by other factors. In the *Saraswat Satra* it is shown that when the march has started, the *Adhwaryu* leader carrying the *Shami* wood\* (of latent fire) marches forward and selects the place of camping after one day's journey. Taking rest there in the usual *Yajna* manner, the march goes on. The emigres have been provided with ten cows and one bull to begin their life. You may march on, find pasture-land and occupy enough of it to provide for a hundred cows. The *Gana* must find enough space and resources for a population based on a herd of one hundred cows and some bulls, a few hundred sheep and goats. (When later on the productivity of labour increased, this limit seems to have increased to a thousand cows, which most probably signifies that townships are growing and the *Gana* is going down.) The most primitive commune of a hundred cows should have consisted of how much population? There is no indication. But we can attempt a guess. The *Arsha* marriage in later law equates, as we saw before, one wife with one cow and one bull. If one wife or woman in monogamy is one family, we may say the above *Devasatra* expected a hundred families to form the maximum limit of a *Gana*. *Manu*, in his chapter on evidence before law courts in the *Kali* age, relates a peculiar conception of his time that one who gave false evidence in respect



of a cow incurred the sin of killing ten relatives. In Manu's time, the exchange value of man (as a slave) had fallen a great deal than in the days of the commune, when there was no slavery. Thus, it would appear that the *Gana* should have consisted at the most of not more than five hundred souls. However, this has not much direct relation to our main point, except to show how production technique imposed a limit on the size of the aggregate population.

In the search for space and wealth, the *Gana* was sometimes annihilated by disease and death or enemies. A *Gana* weakened by loss of people injected new blood in its system by adoption of people from another *Gana-Gotra* or wholly amalgamated with another. In those days of difficult means of communication and no means of contact in daily life between widely separated people, the different segmenting *Gana-Gotras* and tribes evolved their own dialects very fast and would appear as almost complete aliens to their mother *Gana* in course of time. Large-scale adoptions and amalgamations in such cases would create mixed language in the new tribes and *Ganas*. Sanskrit language is full of such peculiarities and grammarians, devoid of a background of social history, have vainly broken their heads in explaining the rise of these peculiarities. The great grammarian Panini, for example, in order to derive twenty-one forms of seven cases of the pronouns, I and Thou (*Asmad* and *Yushmad* in Sanskrit), had to write twenty-three rules, which means they are no rules at all. These could only be explained on the basis of amalgamation of tribes and gens and not by the action of mutation through passage of time, as personal pronouns are the toughest to any such change.<sup>2</sup>

The procedure of adoption of a *Gana*, of strangers, either

<sup>2</sup> The problem was solved by Rajwade by finding the original word to be quite different from that of Panini. See 'संस्कृत भाषेचा उलगडा'

Speaking of the Iroquois, Engels says:

'In fact, tribe and dialect are substantially co-extensive. The establishment of new tribes and dialects through subdivision was in progress in America until quite recently, and can hardly have ceased altogether even now. Where two weakened tribes have amalgamated into one, it happens, by way of exception, that two closely related dialects are spoken in the same tribe. The average strength of American tribes is under 2000.' (*The Origin of the Family*, etc., pp. 151-52.)



singly or in groups, is called *Vratyastoma* in the *Yajna* ritual. That this adoption is not the same as the adoption of an heir to property by the monogamian family of the later age is clear from the fact that the adopted did not belong to any individual family because none had so far come into existence in the *Gana* family. The *Yajna* ritual only took the stranger, who was not a kin, into the kinship of the *Gana* and as such admitted him into the economic and social life of the commune and saved him from annihilation, which was the fate of all strangers, who *ipso facto*, because of being non-kins and of a different tribe, were considered hostile and inimical, and killed off as such, when captured.

The migrating *Gana*, in its search for pastures and cattle-raising areas, had to engage in wars with hostile tribes. The *Rigveda* is full of such wars, waged by the Deva-*Ganas*. The *Adi Parva* of the *Mahabharata* and the traditional stories of lineage and descent in all mythologies are full of the perpetual feuds between the various *Ganas*, the *Ganas* of Aniti, Vasu, Rudra, Dyaus, Diti and others. Many of these most ancient warring *Ganas* are known by their mother names. But the wars of the *Rigveda* period, especially those of the ten kings and known after Sudas and Divodas, are wars of *Ganas*, headed by patriarchs, and obviously belong to that period when mother-right had been overthrown and patriarchy was on the way to private property, slavery and class war. But right up to that period, even under the patriarchs, the wars retain the character of being the wars of one *Gana*, or a federation of *Ganas*, against another. Secondly, they are wars frankly undertaken for cattle, water, pasture land. Thirdly, the enemies of the Aryans, such as the Asuras, Daityas, Rakshasas, the Ahis and Dasas were also of the gentile organisation of the *Yajna* mode. This is clear from the fact that they also are shown to be performing *Yajna* with their *Agni*, but in the 'wrong manner', with wrong *Mantras* and hence wrong result according to the Devas. Fourthly, the mode of conducting the war and the mode of disposal of the acquired wealth is the typical *Gana mode*, that is, disposal of conquered wealth is not by private appropriation by a class, nor is the leadership and conduct of the war in the hands of hired standing army as in a class State.

We do not know where and how long these gens and tribes



acknowledging descent from the common mothers, Diti, Aditi, Danu, Vasu, Kadru, Vinata, Bhanu and others, living in the primitive communist manner, occupied Aryan history and its battles. Only we can say that they were gentile commune organisations based on the collective mode of production. Though in popular mythology today these gods have been endowed with immortality, omniscience, power to do or undo the world, their origin being nothing but human is not very much hidden or forgotten. The *Atharvaveda* distinctly says<sup>3</sup> that the Devas were mortal beings. So does the *Shatapatha Brahmana* describe them as a class of mortal beings and the *Aitareya Brahmana* puts Indra, Agni and Prajapati in the same category.

Not only are they mortal beings, but their social organism being of the *Gana* type is specifically mentioned. The tribe of *Vasus* had 8 *Ganas*; Rudras had 11; Maruts had 21; Adityas had 12; Ribhus had 3, and so on. The Deva-*Ganas* had segmented and spread out into many gens, and after a lapse of time had become so far removed from the ties of kinship and language that they had become aliens to each other and fought among themselves for cattle and wealth. There were such as Puradeva, Muradeva, Shishnadeva, Shuradeva, and so on. The *Rigveda* mentions a big feud between the Deva-*Ganas* and the Panis. The latter had stolen the cattle-herds of the Deva-*Ganas*, whose leader in this war was a woman, Sarama. She leads the Devas through rivers and forests and finds the Panis and war ensues. In the Deva-Asura wars, mythology holds that the Asuras originally belonged to the Deva-*Gana* stock.

We have already seen that the commune in its peacetime economy had the elected functionaries called the *Adhwaryu*, the *Hota*, etc. In the *Gana* they were not a privileged, irremovable, standing, paid executive like that of the modern State or the executives of the exploiting classes, directing the production of profit for the exploiters. *They were themselves producers elected to do the work of direction of communal labour and receiving, before differentiation of property came in, as much as the others from the social fund.*

As in peace, so in war. Production of food and war almost meant the same thing in many cases. So much so that one of

<sup>3</sup> *Atharvaveda*, 11-5-19, 4-11-6.



the Sankrit words for war is '*Gavishti*', also meaning a small *Yajna* to get cows. The whole commune being an armed organisation and a differentiation or division of labour not having as yet set in, war was the function of the commune as a whole, though it was fought by men. Naturally in early stages the same chief *Adhwaryu*, who functioned in the *Yajna*, directed war also; for the same reason, in the early beginnings of Aryan history, we find no such differentiation as a chief for war and chief for peace economy, the former being a Kshatriya *Rajan*, and the latter a Brahmin *Purohit*. For the same reason, we find famous warriors being Brahmins as leaders of *Brahman*, the commune collective, whose special task in later periods is supposed to be performance of *Yajna* only.

As among all barbarians every communal act, thing or surrounding is endowed with godhood and made a subject of religious ceremony, so among the Aryans also. When the *Brahman* or *Gana* commune elected its chief of war, he became *Brahmanaspati*, *Brihaspati*, or *Ganapati*. The most learned adviser of the gods in their wars with the Asuras was called *Brihaspati*. *Ganapati* has survived among the Hindus as the god, who has to be invoked at the beginning of every function. All the three names signify the chief, the leader of the commune, who has to lead them in war and peace. As their representative and leader, the commune gave him his share (*Havi*) from the common produce for maintenance, and called upon him to destroy the enemies and lead the way to wealth. The *Ganapati Atharva Sheersha* describes this *Gana* leader as wearing red-dyed clothes, carrying a throwing rope, a three-pointed spear and a big elephant tooth as his weapons to fight the enemies. When the *Gana* fought and annihilated the enemy, it took its cattle and other wealth, captured the women and children, bound the male prisoners of war and returned to its *Gana* home.

Now the *Ganapati* had another task to do. The war loot is not private property, it belongs to the *Gana*. Such of it as can be consumed individually awaits distribution. The *Gana* calls upon the *Ganapati* to mount up the central seat kept for him (*Asandi*) and distribute the wealth. It is a great occasion for feast and enjoyment. The brave and successful leader, and along with him the commune, is praised. He is *Ganapati*, he is



*Priyapati*, he is *Nidhipati*. As such he presides over the distribution of conquered wealth and the feast of the *Gana*.

The first to form the sacred food of the feast for the *Agni*-fire and the commune is that horse which entered the territory of the enemy first. That is the leading horse of the *Ashwa Medha Yajna*. It is given a bath and shown round to the people and then tied to the sacrificial post.

But before it is slaughtered, the *Gana* feasts on the usual meat and wine, which is then followed by the men and women joining in a call for the sex dance, which the *Ganapati* is asked to lead. The feast of the group-mating is enjoyed as was the custom of the *Gana* days.

The sex dance is, however, an occasion for a little disharmony, and the cause is the arrival of the new element, the captured women prisoners. They also are a gift to the commune, like all other things seized in war. They are assimilated in the *Gana* through the group-marriage rights of the *Gana*, like the original wives of the *Gana*. In this revel and bid for the new beauties, some of the *Ganikas*, i.e., the original *Gana* wives, become neglected and remain without partners. They lament the lack of attention of the males in a manner which cannot be described here. The *Shukla Yajurveda* describes this as *Vilapu* and in that dialogue, called *Kshatta-Palagali-Samvada*, which is part of the *Yajna* ritual, it is described in a language which would be considered highly obscene today but was admissible and holy then.

After this feast and adoption of women, the commune has to discharge two more duties, which again are the subject-matter of *Purusha Medha* and the *Brahma Medha*, the former being the disposal of the male war prisoners and the latter of those killed in battle.

In the very early stages of its growth, the productive capacity of the commune, with the crude instruments at its disposal, is not such that the producer can produce enough for himself to replace his labour-power and also to yield a surplus. Hence at such a stage there is no room for slaves being brought into the social organisation and employed as such for the benefit of its owners. When war prisoners were captured, some of them for considerations of strength, beauty, skill in medicinal knowledge, etc., were adopted in the commune. On adoption they



became full-fledged kins—that is, members. What is to be done with the others, for whom there is no place in the poor economy of the commune, in which they would be so many more ‘mouths’ and not ‘hands’? Of course, they had to be killed. They are the enemies of the commune and are offered to the great fire-god *Agni* in the *Purusha Medha*. The present *Medha* is not a remnant of cannibalism. No doubt, in their remote prehistory, the Aryans had to pass through a stage of cannibalism due to extreme shortage of food and poor productive forces. But if the *Purusha Medha* were a remnant in ritual form of that stage, the ceremony would have provided for at least some symbolic *eating* of the slaughtered being, as is done in all other cases. The available ritual does not anywhere give such indication. It lays down that on the third day of the *Yajna*, wherein there are eleven posts for tying sacrificial animals, all the animals tied to the posts are killed as usual. Then the men (called *Narapashu*, men-animals), who are to be killed and are standing in between the spaces of eleven posts, are offered to the various deities. The presiding functionary of the *Yajna*, called the *Brahman*, sings *Richas* from the *Purusha-sukta* and taking a piece of burning wood, waves it around them three times. After this they are all released, not killed. Whereas in the ordinary course, the fire-god would have got pieces of their bodies as *Ahutis*, ghee is poured into his mouth as a substitute for now depriving him of his prey.

The waving of fire round the victims and their dedication certainly shows that at one time they were killed and burnt. But in the *extant* ritual, they are not killed but released. Why? Not because the Aryans have become merciful. A people whose laws at later stages provided for the flogging, mutilating and beheading of men and women for the smallest crimes, who massacred people in thousands in their wars with the *Anaryans*, could not have turned suddenly humanitarian and refused to kill or eat these men-animals. The simple reason was that the present ritual belongs to a period when prisoners had ceased to be killed and were converted into *slaves*. Social technology had progressed, and man’s labour got the capacity to produce a surplus, it became valuable to the owners, who would own the man alive, rather than allow god *Agni* to eat him dead. To kill war prisoners became a waste, a thing positively harmful to the Aryans,



who now began to convert them into slaves—that most useful institution which later entered Aryan society on the corpse of the free and equalitarian commune.

That this change came later and changed the original character of the *Purusha Medha*, as the ceremony of massacre of war prisoners of the *Gana*, is suggested quite positively by the fact that in the present *Vidhi* or ritual the men are offered in terms of the *Purushasukta* verses, which is a *Sukta* of the subsequent slave-constitution of the Aryan *Gana*, when *Varnas*, slaves, private property and State have arisen therein. We shall see this later on.

There still remains the disposal of those kins killed in war. No special ceremony apart from the usual disposal of the dead is observed in this. The burning of the dead, whether in war or otherwise, is not an individual concern, contrary to the opinion of some writers. It is also a *Yajna* ritual and it carries the significant name of *Brahma Medha*. The present ritual says that a person who has accepted *Agni-hotra* alone, when dead, is dealt with according to the *Shrauta Vidhi* (i.e., old *Vedic* rites), and it is called *Brahma Medha*. All other persons' bodies are dealt with according to the later *Smriti* rites. And then it is called *Pitan Medha*. *Smriti* rites obviously are of recent origin. In the early *Yajna* society the whole commune was *Agni-hotri*. Hence every death was treated as a *Brahma Medha* of the whole commune. The dying man as a kin was a limb of the commune, the *Brahman*. His death was a partial death of the whole *Gana* itself. It was a common rite and duty of the whole *Brahman* to join in the *Medha*.

Critics<sup>4</sup> who object to the proposition that the Aryans had a gentile or *Gana* organisation, just as any other barbarian people, put forward the argument that according to the Morganite definition of gens, there must be a common burial ground (or burning in the *Agni*?) for the *Gana* members which they say the Aryans have not got. The *Brahma Medha* ritual is a reply, as shown above, to these critics.

In order to complete the picture, there remains the distribution of other booty captured. All the feasting, dancing, the disposal of men and women prisoners would not be complete

<sup>4</sup> Viz., Karandikar in his *Hindu Exogamy*.



without settling the question of the captured wealth, cattle, pots, ornaments, dresses, etc. This act is the subject of what is known as *Danam*, usually wrongly translated as a gift or charity, by *Vedic* scholars.

We have already pointed out that in the *peacetime* economy, the *daily proceeds* of collective labour, when distributed to individual members and consumed and appropriated by them, were characterised as *Havana*, *Havi*, *Hutashesha* or *Yajnashista*. The distribution of the commune of goods acquired in *war* or of durable goods which were held on account of the commune and were distributed from time to time on festive occasions, such as weapons, clothing, pottery, etc., was characterised as *Danam*. It is this which the *Brahmanaspati* is to do when he is asked to ascend the seat with '*Utibhih*'\* (with presents). In the *Atharvaveda* he is called upon 'to divide the wealth' in the words '*Vibhaja Vasooni*.' It is worthwhile to note that the *Ganapati* is addressed as '*He Vasu*', the wealth is called '*Vasooni*', and that the Vasus are a *Gana-Samgha*, acknowledging descent from a common mother, *Vasu*.

*Danam*, distribution, here is not the private function of the tribal chief, dependent upon his will, to do or not to do, because the conquered wealth belongs to the commune. *Danam* like *Havana* is a social function only held at certain intervals, when the commune requires it and at the end of every war expedition. Hence in commune ideology, it is generally associated with war-chiefs, with *Ganapati* or *Brahmanaspati*. The word *Danam* in the *Rigveda* means '*division*', generally from the root '*da*' to divide. As such it had no significance of charity or favour in it.

When common property and the commune broke down, when war became the function of the king and his class of Kshatriyas, when wealth accumulated in private households of these Kshatriyas, when proceeds of war, instead of being considered communal as of old, began to be considered the property of the king and the ruling class, then *Danam*—distribution of the common-conquered wealth—instead of being a compulsory social function and duty of the war-chief, *Ganapati*, became a private

\* गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे । कविं कवीनाम् उपमश्रवस्तमम् ।

ज्येष्ठराजं ब्राह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पते आ नः ऋणवन्न ऊतिभिः सीद सादनम् । ऋ. २



duty of the king and the ruling class. If they did it, it was virtue. In people's minds it was so much attached with the war-chief, that if the king in later periods did not do *Danam*, he was considered a bad king. But if he failed, there was no communal right and force to compel him to do it because the commonalty had been disarmed and suppressed; it was now a class rule. *Danam* became now a voluntary virtue and charity of the kings and Kshatriyas. It also lost the character of an equal and general distribution. It remained within the discretion of the private donor to select his donee. The ruling class selected its own favourites and enriched them by *Danam* at the expense of the people. Hence arose the difference between 'good' and 'bad' *Danam*, e.g., the moral discussions (viz., *Geeta*) regarding the *Desha*, *Kala*, *Patra* for a *Danam*. (Place, time and object of *Danam* decide as to whether it is good or bad type of charity and would bring virtue or sin to the donor.) Such a discussion or question just had no place in the days of the commune. *Danam* under the commune was a protection, as of right, against starvation for the sick, the aged, the maimed and the weak, who had the first claim on social property. But when private property and class rule arose, *Danam* became its very opposite; it was converted from an instrument of social insurance to one of primitive enrichment of a class, that of Kshatras and Brahmins, i.e., the ruling class.

The distribution of social property created or conquered by the *Gana* commune formed an essential part of the *Yajna* mode and hence *Danam* and *Yajna* became inseparable. In fact, *DANAM and HAVANA is the mode of collective distribution—in, the YAJNA mode of collective production*. But later on, under private property and class rule, *Danam* and *Havana* became the mode of private appropriation of social product.

The successful wars led by the bravest and most skilful *Ganapati* could live in the commune memory by the amount of booty in gods and women added to the commune and distributed by the war leader. These were commemorated in the *Danasuktas* and formed a part of social record. Thus arose the *Danasuktas*.

The same practice of record continued when the *Danam* ceased to be part of commune *Yajna* and became the private affair of the king and his class. The composer then appeared



as a private recipient *Purohita* of the *darbar* of the king. But *Vedic* scholars (Oldenberg, Winternitz, Ketkar and others) one and all have completely misunderstood the function and import of *Danam* as of all the *Yajna* institutes and hence of *Danasuktas* and their composers, whom they falsely describe as being merely hired composers of gift-giving kings.

The *Vedic Danasukta* in its original, not the later, form was an essential part of the social mode of production and distribution, a social duty executed on behalf of the commune, which shared in the distribution and praise as a whole and hence inspired its composers or *Purohita Rishis* to sing the record of victory, wisdom and valour of its leader *Ganapati* and the consequent communal joy of *Danam*. The tradition continued and stuck to the new king-State, when private property and slavery arose. On the breakdown of the *Yajna* mode in its essentials and on the enthronement of the exploiters' State, *Danasukta* as an institution also vanished.

The *Gana* distribution of the *Hutashesha* or *Havana* also underwent the same transformation. Whatever food was there was for all to consume without distinction. The *Satra* law enjoined it. There was no question of a private householder cooking 'his own food' on his own *Agni*, for himself separately since he and his 'own' did not exist. When private property and households came, the *Yajna* law persisted to claim a share, but now only by the property-less and houseless, who haunted the private householders. Thus arose the moral code that those who cooked only for themselves without a thought of other beings around in need of food were denounced as 'eaters of sin'.\* But private property and its class only laughed at such denunciations, the protesting ghosts of commune morality!

Just as the function and duty of the war-chief or *Gana*-chief to give *Danam* attached to the king and the Kshatra class in the new class society, the right of the *Brahman*, the commune, to compel the distribution of *Danam* and to receive it, as also *Havana* and *Hutashesha*, transferred itself in the new class society, to another section of the ruling class, namely, the Brahmins, who as conductors of the *Yajna* process, the *Vedas* and the consequent intellectual inheritance became the posses-

\* भुजते ते त्वघं पापाः ये पचन्ति आत्मकारणात् । —गीता. अ. ३-१३



sors of its proceeds. Brahmins constituted themselves alone as the real successors of the *Brahman*, the commune, and as such receivers of all *Danam* and *Havana*.

Thus the production relations of the commune produced their own ideology and forms, but when the commune and the natural constitutional forms of its property broke down, the remnants of the old ideology and moral values, which still continued to struggle for existence, were seized and wielded by the new classes in their own class interests, in their own way. Aryan society soon saw, with the rise of private property and class society, how a moral law, a common interest under collectivism that was a guarantee of protection against starvation and of equitable distribution for all people in the commune, turned into its very opposite in class society; how it became a source of oppression, monopoly and concentration of property in the hands of a small class of exploiters and a cause of starvation to the majority of the toilers, to the weak, the maimed, the sick and the aged property-less, to the vast mass of the poor householders, to the slaves and serfs in the new *Kali* age of civilisation.



## CHAPTER VIII

### RISE OF VARNAS, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND CLASSES

WITH the help of the *Vedic* records and the Epics, we saw how the Aryan community worked in the collective, lived and grew, wielding the great discoveries of new instruments of production, namely, fire and domestication of cattle, and the consequent development of its productive forces, for stability and progress.

But the productive forces never remain static. The road of development progressed from one stage to another, affecting social organisation, man's life and ideology.

Aryan man along with his brothers of the Semitic, Turanian and other groups, was more fortunate than some of the other members of the human family inasmuch as he found valuable cattle in the wild stage that could be domesticated and used for sustaining life. The Asiatic regions of Aryan man abounded in this cattle, which was not the case, for example, with the American continent. The classic land of cattle breeding and consequent growth of civilisation is Asia. Engels says:

In Asia he found animals that could be domesticated and propagated in captivity. The wild buffalo cow had to be hunted down; the domestic cow gave birth to a calf once a year, and also provided milk. A number of the most advanced tribes—Aryans, Semites, perhaps also the Turanians<sup>1</sup>—made the domestication, and later the raising and tending of cattle, their principal occupation. Pastoral tribes separated themselves from the general mass of barbarians: *first great social division of labour*. These pastoral tribes not only produced more articles of food, but also a greater variety than the rest of the barbarians. They not only had milk, milk products and meat in greater abundance than the others, but also skins, wool, goat's-hair, and the spun and woven fabrics

<sup>1</sup> The Turvash of the five sons of Yayati referred to before—  
S.A.D.



which the increasing quantities of the raw material brought into commoner use. This, for the first time, made regular exchange possible. At the preceding stages, exchange could only take place occasionally; exceptional ability in the making of weapons and tools may have led to a transient division of labour. Thus, unquestionable remains of workshops for stone implements of the neolithic period have been found in many places. The artificers who developed their ability in those workshops most probably worked for the community, as the permanent handicraftsmen of the Indian gentile communities still do. At any rate, no other exchange than that within the tribe could arise in the stage, and even that was an exception.<sup>2</sup>

This passage from Engels has already been corroborated from the *Vedic* traditions mentioned in previous chapters. It was these temporary divisions of labour and occasional exchange which are the cause of the occasional mention of the process denoted by the words '*Kraya-Vikraya*,' (to sell, to exchange) in the very early *Vedic* verses. There regular trade as such, of the later *Brahmana* and *Smriti* age, has not come into existence, but its seeds are growing. Though tool-makers and skilled men were found and did their jobs for the commune, like the early makers of Indra's *Vajra* or the often praised and often mentioned *Takshan* and *Rathakara*, the Aryan commune, to begin with, had no internal division of labour, dividing the members into so many *Varnas*, each allocated to a definite task of labour. To arrive at *Varnas*, they had first to grow in numbers, on the basis of the new cattle-wealth, produce different varieties of products and begin their exchange, among themselves. When the developing productive forces come to that stage, the *Varnas* have come into existence.

As Marx says, the number and density of the population are a necessary condition for the division of labour in society.<sup>3</sup> The domestication of cattle in Asia, including the horse, had created the pre-conditions of the *Varna* division of social labour for the Aryan commune.

That the *Varna* division in Aryan society is a historical growth and arises only at a certain stage of its development is admitted by all historians and even the Hindu *Rishis*, who are shown to claim divine origin for it. That Aryan society had no *Varnas*

<sup>2</sup> *The Origin of the Family*, etc., pp. 259-60.

<sup>3</sup> *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 352.



first, then arose three *Varnas*, and that they arose strictly on the foundations of qualifications for labour and its products and nothing else, is stated in so many words in almost all places where this subject has been discussed in the Hindu texts.<sup>4</sup>

Division of labour in society arises out of necessity, out of the growing productive forces. It is not the peculiar invention of the genius of this or that *Vedic Rishi* or god, whatever be the claims of the religious writers of antiquity, so far as the origin of the *Varna* scheme is concerned.

The process of the division of labour is described by Marx as follows:

Division of labour in a society, and the corresponding tying down of individuals to a particular calling, develops itself, just as does the division of labour in manufacture, from opposite starting points. Within... a tribe, there springs up naturally a division of labour, caused by differences of sex and age, a division that is consequently based on a purely physiological foundation, which division enlarges its materials by the expansion of the community, by the increase of population, and more especially, by the conflicts between different tribes, and the subjugation of one tribe by another. On the other hand... the exchange of products springs up at the points where different... tribes, communities, come in contact; for in the beginning of civilisation, it is not private

<sup>4</sup> Bharadwaja asked Bhrigu as to what differentiated one *Varna* from another. Because, he said, they cannot be identified by colour. If colour were the index then there has been a melange of all *Varnas*. Neither passions nor their physical capacities and weaknesses mark them off from each other. Bhrigu says that all was *brahman* before but then the Brahmins came off it first by their deeds or functions and became a *Varna*.

भारद्वाज उवाच—

चातुर्वर्ण्यस्य वर्णेन यदि वर्णो विभज्यते ।  
सर्वेषां खलु वर्णानां दृश्यते वर्णसंकरः ॥ ६  
कामः क्रोधो भयं लोभः शोकश्चिन्ता क्षुधा श्रमः ।  
सर्वेषां न प्रभवति कस्माद्वर्णो विभज्यते ॥ ७  
तनुः क्षरति सर्वेषां कस्माद्वर्णो विभज्यते ॥ ८

भृगु उवाच—

न विशेषोऽस्ति वर्णानां सर्वब्रह्ममिदं जगत् ।  
ब्रह्मणा पूर्वसृष्टा हि कर्मभिर्वर्णतां गताः ॥ १० ॥ शान्ति १८६

The statement of the *Geeta* on this is the same :

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ॥ गीता अ. ४-१३



individuals but...tribes...that meet on an independent footing. Different communities find different means of production, and different means of subsistence in their natural environment. Hence, their modes of production, and of living, and their products are different. It is this spontaneously developed difference which, when different communities come in contact, calls forth the mutual exchange of products, and the consequent gradual conversion of those products into commodities. Exchange does not create the differences between the spheres of production, but brings what are already different into relation, and thus converts them into more or less inter-dependent branches of the collective production of an enlarged society. In the latter case, the social division of labour arises from the exchange between spheres of production, that are originally distinct and independent of one another. In the former, where the physiological division of labour is the starting point, the particular organs of a compact whole grow loose, and break off, principally owing to the exchange of commodities with foreign communities, and then isolate themselves so far, that the sole bond, still connecting the various kinds of work, is the exchange of the products as commodities. In the one case, it is the making dependent what was before independent; in the other case, the making independent what was before dependent.<sup>5</sup>

This very long quotation from Marx describes for us what happened in the early development of the Aryan tribes. The Aryan commune internally started on the road to division of labour due to the growing multiplicity of products, tasks and functions. The members of a whole commune get differentiated and tied to different tasks and become crystallised into *Varnas*. But this crystallisation into *Varnas* at the early stages, due to the absence of private property and collective ownership of the principal means of production, does not allow the *Varnas* to become hostile classes, as they do later on.

The earliest division of labour in the Aryan commune began where in the *Yajna* mode, the various *Ritvijas*, who formerly were all one, become differentiated into seventeen categories, leading *Yajna* labour in its various branches of production. But these divisions, being occasional and not based upon exchange, at first could not crystallise into *Varnas*.

But when tribal society advanced and various Aryan tribes (the spread-out *Ganas* of their own antiquity and others)

<sup>5</sup> *Capital*, Vol. I, pp. 351-52.



clashed or came into friendly contact, exchange of products surplus to the *Ganas* began. The different products of the different *Ganas* are exchanged and the repetition of this exchange, their repeated demand, mutually begins to affect production internally inside each *Gana* in those branches whose products are in demand at the places of exchange by the various communes. Thus variety of products internally and exchange of those products externally brings about and fixes up the division of labour in society and creates the *Varnas* of the Aryan commune.

'But, slowly, division of labour crept into this process of production. It undermined the collective nature of production and appropriation, it made appropriation by individuals the largely prevailing rule, and thus gave rise to exchange between individuals' (Engels). Once that stage has been reached, private property and classes are born. The *Varnas* metamorphose into contradictory classes and take the path of civil war, class war. The primitive commune dies, never to return.

Does this historical development, which we have outlined in terms of the science of historical materialism, receive any support from the *Vedic* and Epic traditions in the literature of the Hindus? Though they cannot be expected to give us their origins in the above way, do they give us some basis in their own barbarian way to come to the above conclusion? They do.

The source of this information is, as usual, the stories of Creation as given by the *Vedic* authors. Every new problem that confronted that society was discussed as a problem of Creation undertaken by the *Brahman* or the *Prajapati*. The problem of the rise of the *Varnas*, in a society which had no *Varnas* and no division of labour of that type, is presented to us as a part of the science of Creation.

The *Varnas* of Aryan society were first three in number and later became four. Hence the stories of Creation discuss in some places the three *Varnas*, in some the four. But it is accepted by all that at first there was no *Varna* at all or only one, then came three and later was added the fourth, *the fourth one being not a real VARNA originally arising out of that society itself*.

The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (II, 1-4-11) tells us what *Prajapati*, the Creator of the people, brought forth. We find him giving birth to different trios where formerly there was none. The sets of trios are first *Bhu, Bhuvah, Swah*; the other set is the



earth, the sky and the atmosphere in between; the third trio is Brahma, Kshatra and Visha, *i.e.*, the three *Varnas*, the fourth trio is himself, or the soul (*Atman*), the *Praja* or people, and cattle. In this story the trio of the *Vedas* was missing; so the *Taittiriya Brahmana* (III, 12-9-12) follows another scheme and tells us that at first it was all *Brahman* from whom arose this Creation. Then it tells us that each *Veda* gave off one *Varna*. In this the order is that the most ancient *Rigveda* gives off the Vaisya, the *Samaveda* gives off the Brahmin and the *Yajus* gives off the Kshatriya. Both these authors do not mention the Sudra as the fourth *Varna*. The third account in the *Taittiriya Samhita* of the *Yajurveda* (VII, 1-1-4) makes a still more detailed division. *Prajapati* has the desire to produce and then from his mouth, his chest and hands, his waist and his feet grow forth the four *Varnas*. But the peculiarity of this account is that each *Varna* is born with one *deity* for itself, one *Chhandas* or rhythm, and one *animal*. We will not go into the detailed allotments of each. We only note that while the *first three Varnas* get a *deity* each, the *fourth*, the Sudra slave, alone has *no deity*. But, curiously enough, he has all the other things, *i.e.*, *Chhanda*, animal and *Stoma*, like everyone else. The animals allotted are the goat (*Ajah*) for Brahmins, the sheep (*Avih*) for the Kshatriya, the cow for the Vaisya and the horse for the Sudra.

What is the outstanding common feature of all these stories? The Aryan historian, with all his confusion between man, animal and the world, wishes us to know that he knew that at first it was all one *Brahman*, then grew the three or four *Varnas*, that the first three sprang from the same homogeneous society of *Gana-Gotras*; hence they had deities, while the fourth had none, being an alien conquered slave, that the development of cattle and wealth went with development of men and their *Varnas*, that *Varnas* grew and crystallised as the *Vedas* differentiated and the mode of *Yajna* production evolved through its various phases. The tremendous efforts that the writers of that age are making to find some logic in the whole growth of man and his world, point to us the essential facts of the situation, though not their true scientific historical connection. That was possible, because the authors noted what they saw.

The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (XIV, 4-2-23) is still more explicit



on one point. It says that this *Brahman* in the beginning was only one and undivided. It must be remembered here that this *Brahman* is not that one of the later *Upanishadic* philosophy. But this one undivided state would not lead to growth, progress and development. And so it began to divide and to give forth new forms like that of the Kshatra and its Indra, Varuna, etc.\* Even then it would not progress, then it gave forth the Visha, with their *Gana* gods, and so on.

Thus the *Vedic* memory, outlining for us the observed line of growth of the Aryan communes, tells us that as instruments of production progressed, cattle and wealth grew and the population multiplied, the variety of products at the disposal of these communes and their relations with others called forth, in obedience to the laws of historical development, the division of labour in society, that is, the *Varna* divisions, with their different functions. What was one whole commune, with all its members bound to and dependent on each other, became differentiated into independent *Varna* organs of the same society, and what were scattered into various independent *Ganas* were subjugated or brought into one fold and made dependent on each other in a growing world, as Marx says. The dominating factor in all this was the production, distribution and exchange of life's necessities, which formerly built the *Brahman* commune and now the new-growing *Varna* society.

Social division of labour and exchange reacted upon each other and together developed production. Two new achievements in the instruments of production were carried out at this stage. One has the invention of *agriculture* and second the invention of the *smelting of ores* and the loom.<sup>6</sup> The climate of the Black Sea steppes and the Turanian plateau 'does not admit a pastoral life without a supply of fodder for the long and severe winter. Hence, the cultivation of meadows and grain was here indispensable.... Once grain was grown for cattle, it

\* ब्रह्म वै इदम् अग्रे आसीत् एकम् एव । तद् एकम् मन्त्रव्यं भवत् ।

तत् त्रयोरु मू अग्रे सृजत क्षत्रम् यानि एतानि देवता क्षत्राणि इन्द्रो

वरुण स न एव व्यभवत् स विशम् असृजत् ।

<sup>6</sup> Then appear the *Ayaskar* (smelter) and *Tantuvaya* (weaver) of the *Rigveda* at this stage.



soon became human food.<sup>7</sup> Agricultural land became the new instrument of production in the hands of the commune.

The invention of smelting was first limited to copper and tin and their alloy bronze, which provided serviceable tools and weapons, though it could not displace stone tools, which only iron could do. Gold and silver were beginning to be used for decoration, but had not yet become money. Alongside of agriculture arose *handicrafts*. But such manifold activities were not possible for one and the same individual; *hence the second great division of social labour took place: handicrafts separated from agriculture*. With the division of production into the two great main branches, agriculture and handicrafts, arises production directly for exchange, commodity production. With exchange came commerce, and with growing commerce the precious metals began to be the predominant and general money commodity. Whereas formerly only the most universally useful commodity, cattle, had served as money, its place was now taken by the precious metals.

How does all this affect the mutual relations between the members of the *Gana* commune, their property and production relations?

*The new forces of production caused a revolution in the commune, in its social or property relations.*

As stated already, the social division of labour into *Varnas* destroyed collectivity of production. The common *Yajna* mode round the common fire with common consumption gave place to the separate households with separate fires. Along with the great commune-fire, *Tretagni*, now arises the *Grihya*-fire of the private householder.<sup>8</sup> With the end of the collectivity of production comes the end of collective consumption or appropriation of the product. Individual labour, individual appropriation and individual exchange become dominant, that is, private property has come into existence within the womb of the commune.

<sup>7</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, etc., p. 261.

<sup>8</sup> At this point begins, then, the development of the *Grihyasutras* and the *Grihyakarmas* of the *Atharvaveda*. Because it arises as a fall and breakaway of private property from the ancient God-given common property and the *Tretagni* of the three Vedas, the *Atharvaveda* (as well as *Grihya*) was not given the same sacred and high place as the other three Vedas. The *Trayee* and *Trividya* had a special honour.



Individual production and appropriation creates inequality of property, that is, the commune gives birth to two classes; the rich and poor, the exploiters and exploited, and soon after, slave-owners and slaves.

To begin with, where do the riches concentrate and pre-dominate?

The growing commune in its division of labour is forced to assign the task of the conduct of wars and of protection to certain elected heads and individuals, who become the Kshatra. Similarly the task of observation of seasons, floods, rivers, etc., to direct social-economic effort, devolve on some who become the Brahmins. The rest are the Vishas, the real *demos*, the numerous majority\* of cattle breeders, handicraftsmen and agriculturists. Yet till now they are all in one and the same commune. But they are maturing fast to the point of explosion and break-up of the commune, as the concentration of private property arising from division of labour and exchange lead to antagonism of classes, of the exploiters and exploited.

The tribal wars and exchange of commodities at first take place through the *Ganapatis*, *Brihaspatis* or *Prajapatis* of the commune, belonging to the Brahma and Kshatra *Varnas*. Captured prisoners, cattle and wealth first come to them, and to the commune through them. Commerce develops naturally through them and so does money.

Gradually, therefore, when collectivity begins to break down; property-money concentrates at the point of exchange, in the hands of Kshatra and Brahma; with the *Prajapatis* and *Ganapatis*. Society is split into classes, the propertied Kshatra-Brahma on one side and the toiling Vishas on the other, the Rich and Poor. The appearance of precious metals (*Hiranya*—gold) as money through commerce makes the accumulation of property, of riches easier than before. The Kshatra and Brahmin begin to vaunt forth as the owners of cattle, corn, money and, later on, slaves.

It must, however, be borne in mind here that the exploiting rich and exploited poor are not completely co-extensive with the Brahma-Kshatra on one side and the Visha-Sudra on the other. While most of the Brahma-Kshatra fell in the exploiting

\* ते भूयांसः । तैत्ति० संहिता ७ १-१-४



class, there were poor Brahma-Kshatra also on level with the poor Visha.

The rise of the three *Varnas* takes place simultaneously with the rise of slavery, the Sudra *Varna*. Why? Because slavery arises out of the same momentum that brought forth the *Varnas*—the variety and rising productivity of labour, exchange and private property. 'Hardly had men begun to exchange than already they themselves were being exchanged' (Engels).

Engels says :

The increase of production in all branches—cattle breeding, agriculture, domestic handicrafts—enabled human labour power to produce more than was necessary for its maintenance. At the same time, it increased the amount of work that daily fell to the lot of every member of the gens or household community or single family. The addition of more labour power became desirable. This was furnished by war, captives were made slaves. Under the given historical conditions, the first great social division of labour, by increasing the productivity of labour, that is, wealth, and enlarging the field of production, necessarily carried slavery in its wake. Out of the first great social division of labour arose the first great division of society, into two classes: masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited.<sup>9</sup>

We have already seen that the *Gana*-commune, the pristine *Brahman* with its *Yajna* mode of production, had no place for slavery or the Sudra. Hence, when tribal wars took place, the captured prisoners were mostly killed off according to the *Purusha Medha*. But when labour power of man with the new instruments of production and productive forces could produce more than it required to consume and reproduce itself, it was possible to utilise the war prisoners without killing them. They could be put to labour, from the surplus of which the owners could maintain themselves. Slavery came in and the *Satra*, which could kill the prisoners like the *Sarpa-Satra* of *Janamejaya* vanished from the historical stage of the *Yajna* mode. The conquered was now given a place in the Aryan social organisation, as the fourth, Sudra *Varna*. He was assigned the task, of serving Aryan society which as a whole, reserved to itself the role of free men and masters of the non-Aryans, captured in war or otherwise. He could be sold, hired or killed. He had no rights of property, no family, he had no deity. Though in

<sup>9</sup> *The Origin of the Family*, etc., p. 262.



the scheme of Creation he was assigned, like the others, an animal, the horse, the supreme animal of war, it only means that primarily the Sudra slave was such to the warring chieftain, the head of the commune, the Kshatra *Varna*, and then, later on, distributed or sold to the *Gana* members, who could put him to labour.\*

In its early growth slavery works under the patriarchal form, attached to the household community, in which the slaves work along with the men and women, sons and daughters of the patriarchal household, under the watchful eye of the *Grihapati*. But with the development of exchange when production for exchange and commerce grow, the slaves are put to harder work, are herded in gangs to work the handicrafts, fields, mines, etc. Slavery loses its patriarchal form and becomes an excruciating tyranny for the slave, and greed and accumulation of wealth for the slave-owner. In the *Rigveda* times, slavery had not yet assumed that commercial form. But it soon was to. The writers of the *Rigveda* were joyous at this great invention; the great happiness and pleasure that the slave gave to the owner were frankly sung in exuberance and now form part of the most sacred, 'God-given' *Vedic* inheritance of the Hindus. The only claim the slaves had to divine 'benevolence' in this new institution was that, whereas formerly the war prisoner was put to death in the fire of the *Purusha Medha*, now he was spared his life, which henceforth he could burn in the slow-fire of exploitation of the *Dwija* Aryans, and provide inspiration to sing the hymn of the *Purusha-sukta*. From freedom to defeat and Sudra-slavery, from total annihilation to exploitation—was it not a step forward to social evolution at that stage? The slave got his life, the Aryan got his wealth, on the basis of which both could march forward to a still better life, by developing the growing productive forces, which now could grow only through slavery. That is not, however, the way the Aryan conqueror argued. The great *Brahman* had created the Sudra for nothing but slavery, the '*dasya*' of the other three *Varnas*, of the free

\* तस्मात् तौ भूतसंक्रामिणौ अश्वाश्च शूद्राश्च

तस्मात् शूद्रो यज्ञे अनवक्लृप्तो न हि देवताः अन्वसृज्यन्त ।

तस्मात् पादौ उपजीवतः । तैत्ति. सं. ७-१-१-४



Aryans. And *Brahman* having done that prospered and grew, he says. But it was no longer the same old happy *Brahman*.

Giving birth to slavery, to *tri-Varnas* and the Sudra, to the class cleavage and the consequent class conflicts of the *Dwapar* age, was the last act of the great ancient *Brahman*, of the pristine *Yajna-Purusha*. Once the discovery of fire and cattle had revived the dying *Brahman-Prajapati*, he grew in *Yajna*. Now the birth of agriculture, handicrafts, exchange, private property and *Varnas* led to a series of events, the great class war and class State, which killed that *Brahman* forever. The *Mahabharata* moans in so many words that *Brahman* perished—'*Brahma nanash ha*'. Let us see how it happened.



## THE FALLING COMMUNE MOANS AND BATTLES AGAINST RISING PRIVATE PROPERTY

THE social division of labour into *Varnas* was a necessity arising out of growing variety of products, production and functions. When society has not yet been overtaken by the mad race of production for exchange, for profit, and for cheapening of commodities, the social division merely helps production by raising quality and the use-value of the product. 'In consequence of the separation of the social branches of production, commodities are better made, the various bents and talents of men select a suitable field, and without some restraint no important results can be obtained anywhere. Hence both product and producer are improved by division of labour.'<sup>1</sup> That was the foundation of the stability of the *Varna* system in early *Vedic* society and the later caste system, insofar as caste coincided with occupation.

But such a social division of labour presupposes a society based on backward instruments of production, on agriculture and handicrafts as we found them in medieval and ancient India. When the instruments have undergone a revolutionary change, have changed into modern instruments, that type of social organisation loses its validity and necessity, and collapses.

Division of *Varnas*, however, need not have led to conflict and class war or *Varnā* war. Had not slavery and private property come into the ancient commune economy and given birth to classes, whose interests were hostile to each other's?

This is quite a new phenomenon and staggers the imagination of the commune, the overwhelming majority of whom are, of course, poor. Tribal or *Gana* democracy had allowed the *Varnas* to develop their spheres of activity and the rewards of those activities; the *Varna-dharmas* had laid down what each should do, should get and how each should behave, so that all

<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 365.



may benefit thereby and be happy. In the old *Krita-Treta* age the fruits of all *Yajna* activity, in which the *Varnas* had not been found necessary, belonged to all and the poverty or production was shared by all equally through the *Havana*. Common activity having become varied, had now been distributed into *Varnas* and so also its products. But, instead of everyone sharing poverty and riches equally, only some got all the riches and the others got all the poverty.

Those who have been chosen to direct *Yajna* production, the Brahmins, had now become the leaders of social economy and wielded power following from the knowledge of direction and technique. The *Yajna* production, which formerly all shared, now become their property alone. The Kshatra heads, who had been chosen to lead and fight the battles, did the same. The great Visha democracy alone shared poverty and hard labour, joined in by the Sudras. Collective property grumbled against individual property, appropriation and enrichment. Never was known in the *Yajna* commune that while some got food others starved. Never was there a hunt in the ancient god-commune for that new abominable thing called gold—money (*Hiranya*). The old Indra in his day had fought with stones and bones, had won cows, and fields to graze and water. He drank and thundered. But they in those days did not pile their wealth as their own, only for themselves. In those bygone days they were a little *Gana*, a small settlement of *Ashmavraja*, in which all sat round the common fire and were fed by the commune mother, sang together and were happy though poor.

Now the poet in the *Rigveda* moaned :

Is hunger the only punishment for man at the hands of God? If God had intended that the poor must die of hunger, then why are not the rich immortal? Accumulation of food in the hands of a (propertied) fool has no use for others. He eats by himself, feeds not his friends and is censured.<sup>2</sup>

The rise of exchange, of market, of private labour and appropriation has now created that new phenomenon where men have to run for money, for job, for a buyer of their goods, of their labour power.

The *Vedic* writer again complains:

We have various tasks, various desires, various minds. The

<sup>2</sup> *Rigveda*, X, 117.



carpenter yearns for the hum of the saw, the physician for the moan of the patient, the Brahmin for a worshipper. The smith with his wood, fan, anvil and the oven, awaits the rich man. I am a singer, my father is a physician. My mother works at the corn-pestle. Like the herdsman running after cows, we are after money.<sup>3</sup>

The later *Rigveda Mandalas* speak of the indebted gambler, of the slaves, of jealousy and hatred between man and man.

This is the picture when commodity production has penetrated the commune or *Gana*-society and destroyed its collectivism. Formerly when the producer produced for use, he had control over the product. The collective had control over its production and products. They knew what became of their product. They consumed it; it did not leave their hands to play tricks with them.

But with commodity production and exchange, the products change hands. The producer surrenders it in exchange and knows not its fate. In that process comes a new element, money, and new class, the merchants, a new force, the unknown market. The producer and his product become subject of market, money, demand, chance. The fruits of labour of the producer are not realised by him through the direct use of the product but depend on 'fate.' New alien powers, unseen, unknown, uncontrolled, seize hold of his life, his labour-power, which, though strong and living, may or may not feed him. Thus grows the conflict between the rich and poor, between the new classes of exploiters and exploited.<sup>4</sup>

Conflicts, which the *Yajna* commune had never dreamt of before, mature within the womb of *Gana*-society and break out in violent form. The two most powerful sections of the economically dominant class enter into violent conflicts for control of the exploited wealth. The Brahmin and Kshatriya *Varnas* come to clashes in the appropriation of the wealth produced by the vast *Visha* peasant democracy and the Sudras. While fighting

<sup>3</sup> *Rigveda*, IX, 112-1-3.

<sup>4</sup> And then for the first time, the questions of the philosophy of *Karma* and the question of 'liberation from *Karma*', that is, *Moksha*, arise in Hindu society. Vedic commune never had such a problem:

किं तु कर्मस्वभावोऽयं ज्ञानं कर्मेति वा पुनः ।

पौरुषं कारणं केचिदाहुः कर्मसु मानवाः ।

दैवमेके प्रशसन्ति स्वभावमपरे जनाः । महाभारत, शान्ति ( २४४-४ )



among themselves for the sole power of exploitation, both join hands in battling against the great Visha mass, which still continues to fight for the age-old existence of the commune, its *Dharma*, its morality and ethics, its economy and organisation. Collectivism, now based on common land and common cultivation of the soil for the account of the community, refuses to surrender to private property without a fight; the till-now undivided *Brahman* refuses to be overcome by the exclusive private interests of the dominant *Varna*-class. A sanguinary struggle takes place, which, according to the evidence of the *Vedic* and *Epic* traditions, lasted for several years.

The exploiting class seems to have lost the first battles in the early days of its growth. The memory of that seems to have been preserved for us in that *Akhyayika* of the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* (V. 1) of the *Krishna Yajurveda*, known as the war between Vishnu and the Devas. Shorn of the mythical, mystical or barbarian wrappings, it tells us of the struggle of the antagonistic classes in the following manner.

In the ancient days, the gods began a *Satra*, which, as we have seen, is the collective production under the *Yajna* mode. They agreed, before beginning it, amongst themselves that whatever the products the *Satra* yielded, would belong to all, everybody would have equal share in it. (This agreement is implied insofar as it is a *Satra*, but the record-keeper of the later age wants to be more explicit, which is, of course, much to the good of history!) The number of gods who joined in it was so great and the *Yajna*-fire so big that it occupied a big territory. The Kurukshetra formed the *Vedi*. To the south of the *Vedi* was the Khandava country. Touching the west line of the *Vedi* was the Parinat (the well-developed or well-pastured land). To the north was the Tughra area (the land of the *Ganas* of Turushka or Turvasha). The waterless Maru (Marwar) was made to serve as a dunghill of the *Satra*. In the *Satra*, as we know, every participant is a *Ritviija* and everyone the *Grihapati-Yajamana* (or householder). Hence everyone has the same rights of labour and enjoyment. But all participants elect one *Grihapati* from amongst themselves as the directing authority. In the *Satra* of the gods, Vishnu was elected as *Grihapati* and the *Satra* was on. Though it was a common effort, fame went round that 'the *Satra* was performed by Vishnu', who now thought of



appropriating for himself the good(s) flowing from the *Satra*, that is, the '*Kartritva*.' He became proud and soon an enemy of the gods openly. The gods, therefore, attacked Vishnu in order to wrest from him their share of the proceeds. But Vishnu, being the consecrated head, alone had arms, the bow and the arrow, while the gods were unarmed, as the law in *Yajna* labour. The unarmed gods, seeing Vishnu armed, ran away. Vishnu became careless due to victory and forgot to take further steps for defence. His armed vigilance lessened and thereby he also lost the former '*Yajna-Tej*', the power to fight and conquer. When the *Yajna-Tej* left Vishnu, the gods seized it and buried it in the *Shyamata* herbs. Seeing the gods scattered Vishnu put his bow on the ground and rested his chin on the end of the bow. Seeing this the gods called in the help of the white ants and told them to bore through the string of Vishnu's bow. When the string gave way, the bow snapped and Vishnu's head was blown off. The body of the *Yajna Purusha*, i.e., Vishnu, then, was divided between the three gods, Agni, Indra and Vishwadeva. But it was without a head, hence the fruits of *Yajna* could not be realised. So the gods called in the *Ashwins*, the divine physicians, who, on the promise of a share, set the head on the body, which fructified the *Yajna*.

The account of the civil war, perhaps the earliest class struggle in Aryan society, is so plain that it hardly needs any explanation. Equality of communal production and distribution was being dethroned and destroyed; inequality, the struggle of rich and poor, the division of the commune—the *Yajna Purusha* in the story—into the three *Varnas*, for whom stand the three gods, Agni (for Brahman), Indra (for Kshatra) and the Vishwadeva (for Visha), and the upholding of the new law by the consecration of the armed head, i.e., the State, was struggling to come into existence. Society had split into those who produce and those who appropriate the surplus of the producers, into exploiters and exploited; and the exploited poor had to give up their old *Satra* rights, their collectivism, to the rule of the exploiters, or fight. It was an admission that this society had been cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms. That is the plain story told us by the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*'s author. Though in his first round of the civil war, Vishnu, installed into the headship of the commune by the collective will, failed in his objective to appropriate to



himself or his class the proceeds of common labour and the *Satra* law won, yet it shows us how the new class power and its armed State was taking shape, as the organ of suppression, of force of the dominant class over the exploited toiler. The barbarian author wishes us to believe that it was all divine work and necessity. Yet, the author was too near to the epoch of struggle to hide the crying facts of the economic class antagonism that had now broken out in *Satra* labour and its commune.

Civil war within the same *Gana*, war among one's own kins, wars between brother and brother were unknown to the antiquity of the commune. One tribe warred with another. The sons of Aditi had fought the sons of Diti, those of Vinata had fought those of Kadru, and so on. But had anyone heard of the sons of Aditi fighting among themselves and annihilating or enslaving their own kins? Had the Vasu *Ganas* fought the Vasus of their own blood, of their own *Gana-Gotra*, their own *Yajna* commune? Never. That kind of civil war, class war, *Varna* war, had no place in the ancient primitive *Yajna* commune, because private property and exploitation had not arisen in those *Ganas*. Once it did, civil war was added to the existing tribal wars. Tribes fought tribes to capture slaves, cattle and other wealth, and then they fought their *Varna* (class) civil war to amass this wealth for their private enrichment and to enslave their own toiling kins. As the *Vishnu Purana* says, God had created the different *Varnas* with their different qualities of good and evil (*Sattva-Raja-Tama*), but at first they were quiescent and all *Varnas* were happy. But as time went on 'desire' seized them, they constructed cities and forts, went to war and became unhappy. In the *Mahabharata*, Bhishma was asked how the king-State and civil war arose. He also, while saying that at first there was no civil war, no king, no State, attributes the fall of that pristine commune to the rise of new 'passions' and desires among the members of the commune. They were overcome by '*Moha*,' attraction or delusion for things, lost their power of discrimination; then greed seized them. With greed they began to think of acquiring what they had not. In the clutches of new desire, anger, passion and hatred arose. They forgot their blood relations, blood duty, did what they should not, lost their *Dharma*, fought among themselves, and thus the *Brahman* was destroyed. This sequence of invasion of



vices as the cause of the civil war and the new State, as the cause of the fall of the old, happy, peaceful *Dharma* of the *Krita-Treta* age, recurs in almost every treatise in the Hindu texts.

But they do not tell us why, when the sons of Diti, Aditi, the angry quarrelsome thundering Indra and others fought their enemies and won cattle and wealth, they were not invaded by this chain of vices, by attraction, desire, greed for new things, and civil war to possess them against their own kins? The poor barbarian writers should not tell us why. They only said that those others were virtuous while these were not. But it is not they who become vicious but it is as if vices grow wings and life and come and seize them. And the poor mortals, once happy, though extremely backward and poverty-stricken, begin to kill each other, enslave their own kins and others, and accumulate wealth. The real reason, as we have seen, lies in the revolution in the productive forces that has taken place in the primitive collectives. New productive forces bring in new production relations. Behind the label of these vices enumerated by the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* and others, we see the forces of new productivity, exchange of commodities, to sell what you do not use and to get what you have not got or cannot produce;<sup>5</sup> we see private property and accumulation generating greed, selfishness and other passions and using force to appropriate the proceeds of social labour, and still further intensify the mad desire to accumulate wealth for oneself. The roaming but united commune breaks and scatters into agriculture, handicrafts, towns and cities, and begins a new age with new emotions, vices and virtues, a new world of rulers and ruled, of exploiters and exploited. Not until private property is again abolished, but now on the basis of abundance and not on the old primitive basis of poverty, will man get rid of these vices, their civil wars and finally all wars, under the new world Communism of the future.

<sup>5</sup> The *Mahabharata* describes the sequence thus :

दैन्यम्

मोहः

अप्राप्तस्य अभिमर्ष

कामः

रागः

रक्तस्य अनभिज्ञानम् विस्रवः-ब्रह्मनाश-विप्लुते नरलोके ब्रह्म ननाश ह । शान्ति ५८



Before we go on with the development of this class war, we shall see what other vital changes came into the commune, with the growth of the productive forces and the rise of private property and slavery. The new property relations affected the organisation of the commune in every possible way. Private property destroyed the old organisation of kinship and personal relationship. It destroyed the matriarchy of the commune, the commune family which, at the time we last saw it, was based on the pairing family. It destroyed the prohibition of non-kins entering into the fold of the commune. It brought into existence the private household of the patriarch, father-right and inheritance of property, succession, heredity and all its consequences. The unity of the *Gana-Gotra* dissolved into conflicts of the new private families and classes. Along with the alien slaves, women also lost their freedom, and soon the proud, free Aryan Visha also was bound and sold on the market.



## CHAPTER X

# THE SLAVERY OF WOMAN AND FALL OF MATRIARCHY

THE herds and the other new objects of wealth brought about a revolution in the family. Gaining a livelihood had always been the business of the man; he produced and owned the means therefore. The herds were the new means of gaining a livelihood, and their original domestication and subsequent tending was his work. Hence, he owned the cattle, and the commodities and slaves obtained in exchange for them. All the surplus now resulting from production fell to the man; the woman shared in consuming it, but she had no share in owning it. The 'savage' warrior and hunter had been content to occupy second place in the house and give precedence to the woman. The 'gentler' shepherd, presuming upon his wealth, pushed forward to first place and forced the woman into second place. And she could not complain. Division of labour in the family had regulated the distribution of property between man and wife. This division of labour remained unchanged, and yet it now put the former domestic relationship topsy-turvy simply because the division of labour outside the family had changed. The very same cause that had formerly made the woman supreme in the house,<sup>1</sup> namely, her being confined to domestic work, now assured supremacy in the house for the man: the woman's house-work lost its significance compared with the man's work in obtaining a livelihood; the latter was everything, the former an insignificant contribution....

His achievement of actual supremacy in the house threw down the last barrier to the man's autocracy. This autocracy was confirmed and perpetuated by the overthrow of mother right, the introduction of father right and the gradual transition from the pairing family to monogamy. This made a breach in the old gentile order: the monogamian family became a power and rose threateningly against the gens.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The commune house in the *Satra* labour with the supremacy of *Aditi*, the woman, the primeval mother.

<sup>2</sup> *The Origin of the Family*, etc., pp. 263—64.



The overthrow of mother right and the rise of patriarchy is not explicitly described for us in the *Vedic* literature, as far as I could see. But the transition can be easily seen in the development of the family. In the first place, with the growth of the *Varnas*, exchange and private property, we find that the male *Prajapatis* and *Grihapatis* come into the forefront of history, with their civil wars and tribal wars. The *Gana* wars of the sons of Aditi, Diti, etc., vanish into history. Secondly, the *Gotra-apatyas* are succeeded by sons of fathers; the sons known by mothers become scarce, though they survive in history for a long time, even till recently in South India. Thirdly, since private property and patriarchy grow with the growth of the *Ganas*, their scattering over wide areas in large numbers, the common bond of common matriarchal ancestry soon loses its validity in social existence and is replaced by the patriarchal *Pravaras*. With the end of collectivism and group-*Gotra* marriage, the individual family on the basis of monogamy claims its own property, children and inheritance. Kinship is scattered and forgotten. Side by side with kins come non-kins in the *Gana-Gotra*, consisting of the new slaves, new people trading in goods, and so on. With the growth of war, *Ganas* coalesce, confederate and form tribes on the basis of allegiance to the memory of the past, the memories of common ancestry and common kinship. This grouping of the scattered Aryan kin-*Gana-Gotras* leads to the formation of *Pravaras*. The *Pravaras* inherit their descent from a supposed common father and not the common mother as the *Gana-Gotras* did before. The *Pravara* organisation is headed by nine MALE *Prajapatis* and distinctly arises long after the spread of the *Gotras*. The common patriarchy shown in them is an artificial arrangement to coalesce the kin-tribes together but without the matriarchal origin. Hence, unlike *Gotras*, *Pravara* similarity does not involve a very strict interdiction of marriage between the same *Pravaras*. No doubt the patriarchal *Pravaras* seem to have thought of imitating in this the *Gotra*-interdiction, but the latter was genuine since it was based on real matriarchal blood relationship following from real group marriage, while the former was a mere fiction, merely bowing before the memory of the real past and only inheriting its robes to pass muster in the newly arisen society. The *Pravaras* were thus a mode of asserting common ancestry and



an attempt to hold on ideologically still to the ashes of the dead commune in the new setting of monogamy, patriarchy and private property.

The *Gotra-Pravara* organisation systematised kinship, demarcated kin-tribes from non-kin, the Aryan from the non-Aryan, when alien elements began to come in contact with and enter Aryan society. It was also the new organisational form for the management of social-religious affairs on the basis of gens in the new organisation of *Varnas*, classes and State, of a new society, where now all members were not kin-relations, where, as the Aryan writer puts it, all have not the rights of *Yajna* and *Yaajana*. A new society was in the making, whose composition was recognised and limited by only *territorial* residence, by domicile within the boundaries of a new organisation called the *Rajyam*, *Rashtram*, the State, and not by blood relationship as in the old *Gana*. *Economic and kin relationship now were divorced*. The Sudras and strangers had no place in the *Gotra-Pravara*, but had one in the kingdom, the *Rajyam*.

The *Pravara* system of the Hindu Aryans has been a headache to the Indian scholars, just as it was to the Europeans, when they found it among the Greeks. The *Gotra-Pravara* persists till today and proclaims common ancestry. But our scholars deny common ancestry following from the *Gotra-group* marriage and the *Gana* commune. Hence they dismiss the *Gotra-Pravara* as meaningless fiction.

In order to reply to the critics of the *Gotra-Pravara*, it is best to quote Marx's summary of Morgan's reply to his critics.

The system of consanguinity corresponding to the gens in its original form—the Greeks once possessed it [as the *Gotra* of the Hindu Aryans]<sup>3</sup> like other mortals—preserved the knowledge of the mutual relation of all members of the gens. They learned this for them decisively important fact by practice from early childhood [as the Hindu did it in his everyday *Sandhya* prayer]. With the advent of the monogamian family this dropped into oblivion. The gentle name [*Gotra* or *Pravara* name, told to the Hindu boy after his thread ceremony]<sup>4</sup> created a genealogy compared with which that of the monogamian family seemed insignificant. This name was now to attest its bearers the fact of their common

<sup>3</sup> Parentheses are mine—S. A. D.

<sup>4</sup> Significantly called *Yajnopaveetam*.



ancestry. But the genealogy of the gens went so far back that its members could no longer prove their mutual real kinship, except in a limited number of cases of more recent common ancestors. The name itself was the proof of a common ancestry.....Because the concatenation of the generations, especially with the incipience of monogamy, is removed in the distance, and the reality of the past seems reflected in mythological fantasy, the good old philistines concluded, and still conclude, that the fancied genealogy created real gentes!<sup>5</sup> (*The Origin of the Family*, etc. pp. 169-70)

Father right, private property and inheritance insist on monogamy of the woman, without which the father's offspring cannot be identified. Monogamy and with it woman's chastity and loyalty to man came in to facilitate the inheritance of property (as we already saw), but it was ushered in first, not at the behest of man, but of the woman. The men were not then, and today also are not, willing to give up the habits and claims of the group marriage still expressed in polygamy—Devadasis, Muralis and, finally, prostitution and adultery. With the growth of society and scattering of the formerly small kin-*Gotras* far and wide, with the growth of the new economy, whose unit was now becoming the single family, the old *Gana* rights of all *Gotra* members to the woman of the opposite marriageable *Gotra* wherever she was, was becoming a nauseating burden to the woman. In the small *Gotra*-family, in the small *Ashmavraja*, everyone knew everybody else, they were attached to each other by common labour, though like the unconscious bees in a honeycomb. But now for a *Gana* member, unknown, unrelated, coming from faraway lands, to claim the right over the woman was an infliction on her. In the early days, it was from this group marriage there arose the custom of the host giving his wife to the guest, the '*Atithi*.' To obtain her freedom from this right of the stranger, a relic of the by-gone collective, she insisted on monogamy, as represented in

<sup>5</sup> How our 'good philistines' argue is best seen in *Hindu Exogamy* by Karandikar, and discussion of the *Pravara* by Ketkar in *Vedavidya* volume of the *Maharashtra Jnanakosh*. Only Rajwade approaches within recognisable distance of Morgan.

The memoranda sent by rich Hindu Orthodoxy, on the question of marriage, *Gotra-Pravara* and property inheritance, to the Codification of Hindu Law Committee in recent times, make interesting reading and show how the question is still very much alive.



the transition to pairing marriage. 'Only after the transition to pairing marriage had been effected by the women could the men introduce strict monogamy—for the women only, of course.'

But the monogamy of class-ridden society, with the private property of the rich ruling and ruining the lives of millions of women and men, becomes a mockery for the woman. Since the end of the commune and rise of slavery and class rule, society is haunted with prostitution and adultery. With the economic defeat of woman was ushered in her physical and moral slavery to man and private property.

The overthrow of mother right was the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children.<sup>6</sup>

The callousness with which the 'holy law-givers' of private property put the necessity of having a son to inherit property of the father above that of monogamian ovalty, feelings, chastity and claims of the woman to be treated as a 'personality' on her own, is henceforth seen in the discussion regarding the 'ownership' of the child, produced on the woman by a man who is not her husband. In the *Anushasana Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, Yudhishtira asks very seriously:

Some say that one's son is he who is born on his soil. Some, on the other hand, say that one's son is he who has been begotten from his seed. Are both these kinds of sons equal? Whose again is the son to be?

Clearly, it can be seen that this is the slave-owning farmer talking about his wife as a piece of land and the son as its fruit. To whom does the crop belong—to the one who pays rent, gives seed and cultivates; or to the one who owns the land, whosoever may be the cultivator? Such an ideology and conception of the woman was never possible in the *Yajna* commune, though they hankered more after *Praja*-progeny than these latter-day landlord slave-owners. The *Vedic* writer frankly called the woman of the commune by the epithet '*Jani*', 'one who produces children', but all that was born was hers, was the '*Jana*'. It never occurred to him to ask whose son it was—of the 'soil' or of 'the seed'?—because he had no property to claim as his

<sup>6</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, etc., p. 94.



own to inherit to the exclusion of another. Patriarchal rule had not yet been born. Conversion of woman to the status of a chattel, a mere means to get children, is the ideology of the period of slavery, when man began to be bought and sold to produce wealth for the owner and so was woman to produce a son to inherit it.

The reply to the question of Yudhishtira says, 'His is the son from whose seed he has sprung.' The right of patriarchy is declared as the only valid right. Further:

If, however, the owner of the seed discards the son born of it, such a son then becomes his from whose wife he has been begotten. The same rule applies to the son called Adhyudha. He belongs to the person from whose seed he has sprung. If, however, the owner of the seed forsakes him, he becomes the son of the husband of his mother. Know, this is what the law (*Dharma*) declares.

Manu, by whom Hindu orthodoxy swears, says the same thing.\*

In the age of collectivism and the pairing family the children belonged to the gens of the mother; when the father left the mother, the child remained with her, as we saw in the well-known cases of Arjuna, Bhima, &c. But in the age of slavery, woman is being bought and sold, rented out or loaned by the owning husband, like cattle, to get 'pure' sons to inherit property and slave sons on the slave women to work and produce property.

This treatment of the woman was not limited to the wife alone but was applicable to the daughters and others also. A continuous chain of renting-out of the daughter is typically depicted in the long story of *Rishi Galava*, in the *Udyoga Parva* of the *Mahabharata*. Galava wants to pay the costs of his training to his *Guru* and, being poor, seeks Yayati's aid, who lends him Madhavi, his daughter. Galava hires out the girl for the price of two hundred horses to three kins in succession, each one of

—\* भर्तुः पुत्रं विजानन्ति श्रुतिद्वैधं तु भर्तारि ।

आहुरुत्पादकं केचिदपरे क्षेत्रिणं विदुः । मनु ६-३२

सर्वभूतप्रसूतिर्हि बीजलक्षणलक्षिता । मनु ६-३५

And *Parashar Smriti* adds:

ओषवाताहतं बीजं यस्य क्षेत्रे प्ररोहति ।

स क्षेत्री लभते बीजं न बीजी भोगमर्हति ॥ ४-३२

Even the much-maligned materialists were never so crude!



## THE SLAVERY OF WOMAN

whom enjoys her, gets a son on her and returns her to the father. Galava gives her and the horses and the wealth thus obtained to his *Guru* in settlement of the dues. *Guru* Vishwamitra also, having got a son on her, returns her to Galava, who sends her back to Yayati. The ordeal of this poor woman is not yet ended. On return from all this slavery, she is then asked by Yayati to choose her husband now of her own choice in a *Swayambara*, wherein kings and rich men, young and all, assemble. But by this time, Madhavi has developed such contempt for life and slavery to man, that she bows to all, walks away on them and takes to the forest to fast and pray and to be free from the slavery of class society.<sup>7</sup>

The rights of the patriarch, the slave-owning husband, were not limited only to renting out his wife, daughter, son and others. He had absolute right over their lives and could put them to death at his will. The above-mentioned treatment of the woman is poles apart from the freedom of the *Gotra*-marriage days of the commune. Then woman was respected, the mother as life-giver was sacred and it was the highest sin to kill the mother. The ideology of that period was carried into the slave period and conflicted with the demands of the new slave-owning class that demanded absolute ownership over its 'property,' which included, along with slaves, the wife, son, &c.

The woman struggled to assert herself, and the old customs of the commune, here and there, demanded their continuance, but were suppressed with the greatest ferocity and violence at the hands of the slave-owning man. This is very vividly described for us in the three episodes of Sudarshana-Oghavati, Gautama-Gautami and Jamadagni-Renuka. They also show us how the customs and ideology of the *Gotra*-commune period underwent change in the slave period. When *Rishi* Sudarshana went away from the *Ashrama* leaving behind his wife, Oghavati, a Brahmin guest came. He was not only fed but, according to the *Gana-Gotra* custom, when the guest desired, Oghavati slept with him. When Sudarshana returned and learnt of this, he was very pleased that his wife had carried out the duties of a hostess. The incident, of course, belongs to the period when the *Ganas* have spread afar, the commune is breaking down and

<sup>7</sup> *Mahabharata* : Udyoga 120.



hence the old group-marriage right is being resented by the woman, who is now forming an independent household and living in the pairing form of the family with her husband. That is why Sudarshana was afraid that his wife may not observe all the duties of the hostess and so is pleased to find out that his 'fears' were unfounded and that Oghavati had not 'revolted'.

In the next episode times have changed. Gautama's wife, in his absence, is visited by Indra as a guest, who takes her. On learning this Gautama is angry and asks his son, Chirakari, to behead her and goes away. The son is in a dilemma. According to the old custom and moral code he knows, his mother was not wrong and that he as her son, could not kill her. It would be the greatest sin. But according to the new period, the new class relations, family and class law, he must obey the father's order.\* He waits and ponders. Gautama returns, his anger cooled, and accepts the accomplished fact and is pacified. Here the woman and son win, not because of their right, but because the new law is not yet all powerful.

\* पितुराज्ञा परधर्म स्वधर्मो मातृरक्षणम् ।

अस्वतंत्रं च पुत्रत्वं किं तु मां नानुपीड्येत ॥ ११

स्त्रियं हत्वा मातरं च को हि जातु सुखी भवेत् ।

पितरं चाप्यवशाय कः प्रतिष्ठामवाप्नुयात् ॥ १२

In this the contraposed points are very interesting.

Obedience to the father is an alien-imposed law (*Paradharmā*), protection of the mother is natural self-law (*Swadharmā*). But the son in the slave period has lost freedom, hence he no longer has the right to follow the natural *Gana* law and thus defy the father and stand by the mother. Killing the mother would violate all his old natural emotions and hence make him unhappy. But defying the father, how can he keep place of pride (*Pratistha*) in society? The mother is the past, dying: the father is the future, rising and ruling.

Which has more disastrous consequences in the new order? Beheading the mother is contraposed in value to the mere defiance of the word of the father. Here you have the violent dictatorship of the slave-owner in all its nakedness.

Remember the old days? When Deerghatamas became cheeky and a nuisance, his sons just bundled him off the commune at the order of the mother. And so was Swetaketu silenced for his impudence, when he protested against his mother going off with her *Gotra*-friend. With the death of the commune, free, happy motherhood died. The husband became her slave-driver and sons became her executioners. Divine law and order stood by man and disarmed woman for centuries to come.



In the third episode, Jamadagni finds that his wife, Renuka, just cast a loving glance at Chitraratha Gandharva. He asked his son, Parashurama, to kill her, and he did it there and then. Here the patriarch's right over the wife's life is completely established. She has no personality, no liberty, no mind of her own. Cruel, ferocious, violent dictatorship of the slave-owner has completely dominated her personality and freedom.

These three episodes sum up for us the conclusion of the rise of private property and family, the rule of man, and the subjugation of woman into slavery. It is not culture and love, morality and ethics, idealist philosophy and the peculiarly 'high spirituality' of the Indian that gives us the present-day crushed Hindu woman, without rights, status, personality or freedom. It is the violent dictatorship of the slave-owning class that has brought her to this.

What is the basic force behind this development? Violence alone cannot accomplish it. This violence of the man, the law and order behind him, administered now by the newly arising State, spring from the new productive forces, the new property relations, the new social relations. The fall of the commune, the rise of private property, *Varnas* and classes, bring into existence this new family, in which woman's domestic labour has no social value, in which social labour done by the slaves on the fields and in the workshops predominates and is now appropriated by man alone as his private property.

Woman lost freedom along with the Sudra slave, with the rise of private property. Centuries after, the fall of property in slaves was only succeeded by another private property, that of the feudal landlord, and its fall in turn by capitalist property. The condition of woman's slavery, therefore, only underwent similar changes. From a slave she became a serf and from a serf a proletarian. But her subjugation as such was never abolished.

The question of her emancipation, therefore, is not one of morality, ethics and spirituality, but one of class rule.

From the foregoing we can see that to emancipate woman and make her the equal of man is and remains an impossibility so long as the woman is shut out from socially productive labour and restricted to private domestic labour. The emancipation of woman will only be possible when woman can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer



claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time. And only now has that become possible through modern large-scale industry, which does not merely permit the employment of female labour over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends towards ending private domestic labour by transforming its most drudging tasks into public industry. This can be fully accomplished only when large-scale industry becomes socialised and classes are abolished.

That should also explain why the leadership of the bourgeoisie in India sings the praises of domestic labour, while its captains of industry drive cheap women's labour into factories. The two between them befog the woman and society from seeing the real road to emancipation: that it is not in domestic labour, nor merely in becoming an 'educated earning woman' of the middle classes, that her freedom lies. It is the social revolution, abolishing private property in the means of production and class rule, and along with it the supremacy of the male, that will bring about the emancipation of woman. But that is not the subject of discussion here.



## CHAPTER XI

# THE STRUGGLE OF IRRECONCILABLE CONTRADICTIONS

THE old Aryan commune was fast falling to pieces. It was rent with irreconcilable contradictions, which could no longer be resolved within the old *Dharma* of the *Yajna* mode of production, because that mode itself had broken down. With the development of the instruments of production, new production relations had come into existence and were battling for supremacy as against the ancient *Yajna-Gana-Gotra* relations. Private property, based on slavery, was overthrowing collective property, based on freedom and equality. A violent civil war rent the Aryan *Ganas*. Let us sum up these contradictions, which we have seen developing in previous chapters, before we look into the civil war and its outcome—the death of the *Gana* constitution and the rise of the State.

The small communes of collective *Yajna* labour had enlarged, segmented and multiplied. What was one had become many, what was small had become expanded, 'as the divine *Prajapati* desired,' due to use of fire and domestication of animals.

The organisation of the relations of one to the many created problems. The savage wandering *Gana* of the *Krita* age developed into the widely spread kin *Gana-Gotra* of the *Treta* age. Produce and multiply, work together and consume together in the great *Yajna* round the common fire, observing the immanent laws of the *Yajna* and the *Gana-Gotra* communes—this was the simple, self-evolved *Dharma* for the growing *Ganas*, which solved the problem of early barbarism.

Work and wealth grew. The growth demanded division of labour. Handicrafts, metals, agriculture arose and brought forward again new problems. The *Gana* communes became now internally divided into *Varnas*, with their new economic



roles, but still within the bounds of the collective. Within the womb of the old undivided *Gana* economy arose the diversified divided *Varna* economy. *Gana* rights begin to clash with *Varna* rights.

Growing riches and variety of riches, tribes and *Ganas* of one territory with their characteristic natural products coming into contact with others with their products, brought about exchange of products. Production for exchange undermines production for use. Production for *Havana* is pushed back by production for *Hiranya*.<sup>1</sup>

Exchange broke down collective production, and with it collective appropriation. Private production and private appropriation mean private property has come in. New divisions, hitherto unknown, new antagonisms within the kins of the same *Gana*, arose—the antagonism of the rich and poor. The *Gana* fretted and fumed; finding no way out, it tried to solve an economic problem by moral preaching. It demanded 'strict observance' of the economic laws of *Havana* and *Danam*, which was the age-old mechanism of the distribution of products for use and consumption. It failed. Who was to enforce it? The Brahma-Kshatra defied the injunction and claimed all the *Danam* and *Havana* for themselves. Property concentrated more or less on the lines of the *Varna* division. Though each *Varna* had its poor and the rich, yet the Brahma-Kshatra generally became the owners of slaves and cattle, the propertied classes, exploited classes, exploiting the toiling Vishas and Sudras. Thus *Varna* divisions soon became class divisions and antagonisms. 'Property differences in a gens changed the community of interest into antagonism between members of a gens' (Marx). The Brahma-Kshatra property began to come into conflict with the claims of the great Visha democracy.

Exchange created money, money facilitated accumulation of wealth; and those who accumulated were those who by the *Varna* rights and tradition had power and arms, the technique and the knowledge of conduct of war and direction of economy. Conflicts grew between the poor and the rich, between the exploited and exploiters. *Gana* property fought *Varna* property. The ques-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. कामारो अश्मभिदुग्मि हिरण्य वन्तमिच्छन्तीन्द्रायेन्द्रो परित्स्त्रव । ऋ. ६-१११



tion arose: was wealth for the *Yajna* or one's own *Sanchaya* and *Bhoga*.<sup>2</sup>

Growing riches and productivity had transformed the prisoners of war from the victims of death into workers of slavery. Sudra slavery entered the Aryan commune. Society was rent into two opposites—those who owned the slaves and wealth, and those who slaved for the owners. Into the *Gana* of kins, or blood relations, had entered others who were not of the same blood, were non-kins, such as the new Sudra producers, the merchant-traders from other *Ganas*, alien visitors, etc. The *Gana* laws had no provision for these strange economic forces and classes breaking into the ancient closed commune and its territory. A new law to regulate these new relations in economy, marriage, etc., had to arise by the side of *Gana* law and in opposition to it—opposition because the former was based on exchange and private property, the latter on collectivity.<sup>3</sup> A conflict arose. By the side of *Gana-Gotra* arose the *Gana-Rashtra*; the *Gotra* recognised only kins, the *Rashtra* recognised all who embraced a certain territory and its economy, kin and non-kin together.

Private property had destroyed the commune family and commune house. Within it and against it grew the single family, with its property, inheritance, and so on. The *Gana* came in conflict with the *Kula*, the *Prajapati* with *Grihapati*. The *Tretagni* fire of the commune paled into insignificance before the *Grihyagni* fire of the private family. The Common *Havana* was displaced by the private cooking which, to pacify and cheat the gods and *Gana*, took the name of *Pak-Yajna*. The big *Yajnas* were replaced by the petty individual *Ishtis* for the sel-

<sup>2</sup> The *Upanishad* began to preach: 'Please enjoy by giving up; do not covet anybody's wealth':

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥ ईशोपनिषद्

<sup>3</sup> It is here that new *Dharmas* arise and the new rule, which had no place in the homogeneous *Gana-Gotra* organisation.

जातिजान् पदान्धर्मान् श्रेणी धर्माश्च धर्मवित् ।

समीक्ष्य कुलधर्माश्च स्वधर्मं प्रतिपादयेत् ॥ मनु ८-४१

It is here that the provision had to be made that in case of conflict between the *Shrutis* and other works, the words of the *Shruti* had preference over the others. But actually the others, being representative of the conditions, carried the day, by twisting the *Shruti* to their own end.



fish desires of the private householder, the rich *Grihapati*. They became the *Kamye-Ishtis*.<sup>4</sup> The grand common sharing of food by all the *Gana* members around the fire in the common house was suppressed by private grab, accompanied by symbolic offering of a share to the gods in the form of *Bali* and a share to the guest (*Atithi*) and the beggar, who was the only representative left of the dying *Gana*, with whom the selfish householder agreed to share his food, to get the 'merit of hospitality.'

With the growth of the private family, house and property came the dominance of the patriarch and the inheritance of the son. Patriarchy suppressed matriarchy; the rule of the man over the woman became supreme. Wives conflicted with husbands and sons with mothers.

Private-property rights and life as against the collective-property rights and life created the *Grihya Sutras* against the *Veda Suktas*, signifying by their very name their birth from private property. The *Vedas* began to disappear and had to be reduced into a code, because they were now a ritual, had ceased to grow and develop and were being forgotten.\* The *Sutras* became the authority and conflicted with the *Vedas*. The *Grihya* became the real, the *Veda* became the unreal (*Smriti* or

<sup>4</sup> The transformation of the collective economy of the commune into private economy is reflected in the transformation of the ancient big collective *Yajna-Yagas* into the pigmy *Ishtis* of the single family. The poor householder *Visha* made the *Ishti* into a caricature of the old *Yajna* and since his poverty did not permit him to kill cattle for his small *Yajna*, which the great collective formerly could, from common property, the new *Ishti* ritual provided corn and flour symbols for real cattle to be cut and put in the *Havana* fire! The living cattle had been expropriated by the rich. The poor satisfied himself and the gods with the flour-imitation (as in the *Purodash* of the *Darshapurnamas*, *Anustarani* of *Agnihotra* and *Madhuparka*). Cow-killing stopped now; not because the cow became sacred, but because now it was scarce, a monopoly of the rich and too valuable to the *Visha* peasant to be killed for eating.

\* त्रेतायां संहिता वेदा यज्ञा वर्णास्तथैव च ।

संरोधादायुषस्त्वेते द्वापरे युगे ॥ शान्ति २३८-१०४

द्वापरे विप्लवं यान्ति यज्ञाः कलियुगे तथा ॥ २३८-१०१

The codification of the *Vedas* (*Samhita*) is here held to have taken place along with the rise of the division of labour, *Varnas*, and its consequences. And codification of *Vedas* means that the *Yajna* as a mode of social existence is vanishing.



memory), just as private property was becoming real and dominant, and the collective was becoming unreal and was vanishing but had not yet become completely extinct. The law-givers, therefore, wrote that their new *Sutras* and the *Smritis* were the only law, but in case some saw conflict or contradiction between the new *Dharma* and the ancient *Shruti*, then the *Shruti* was the more valid of the two. But that was only theory. In practice, the new forces ruled and their law was valid.

*Functions which in the old GANA were elective were now becoming hereditary and soon became private interests entrenched against the commune.* The sons of slaves became slaves, property inherited property, poverty inherited poverty. The conflict grew and became acute with the economically powerful classes rearing themselves as the regulators of the whole society in such a way as to perpetuate the growing contradictions and finally subjugate the great toiling majority to the interests and power of the appropriating, owning minority, i.e., the Vaishya-Sudra to the Brahma-Kshatra.

The new productive forces had made *land* as one of the greatest means of production alongside of cattle and handicrafts. In the old *Gana* days people fought and prayed for cattle and progeny (*Praja-Pashavah*). Agriculture was secondary and hence also land. But with the growth of population which could not live on cattle alone, the demand for agriculture increased. Hence felling of forests to clear land for cultivation became a necessity.<sup>5</sup> That was not possible with the bronze weapons. *Iron* smelting was invented. The vast forests fell and land was put under the plough with the help of the Sudra slaves and Vaisya tillers.

Cattle, which so far had held first place in the life of the *Ganas*, were pushed to the second place, and *Bhumi* (land) took the first place as the means of production of the new age. Handicrafts separated off from agriculture, the town from the countryside. Fight for land became the dominating passion of the Kshatriya leadership, along with the fight to possess slave Sudras. These wars affect the organisation of the *Ganas* profoundly. What was once a peaceful collective democracy is transformed

<sup>5</sup> Not planting of trees and afforestation but de-forestation becomes a virtue and hence the burning of Khandava forest is considered a great service in the *Mahabharata*.



into a military democracy, wherein gradually the *Gana* organs of military warfare raise themselves over the head of the whole commune and finally subjugate it.

The increased density of the population necessitated closer union internally and externally. Everywhere the federation of kindred tribes became a necessity, and soon after, their amalgamation; and thence the amalgamation of the separate tribal territories into a single territory of the people. The military commander of the people - *rex* [*Rajan*] . . . . —became an indispensable and permanent official. The popular assembly was instituted wherever it did not yet exist. The military commander [*Rajan*], the council [*Sabha*] and the popular assembly [*Vidatha*] formed the organs of the military democracy [*Gana-Samgha*] into which gentile society had developed. A military democracy—because war and organisation for war were now regular functions of the life of the people. The wealth of their neighbours excited the greed of the peoples who began to regard the acquisition of wealth as one of the main purposes in life. They were barbarians: plunder appeared to them easier and even more honourable than productive work. War, once waged simply to avenge aggression or as a means of enlarging territory that had become inadequate, was now waged for the sake of plunder alone, and became a regular profession.<sup>6</sup>

The rich Brahma-Kshatra families, mounting to wealth and riches as against the poor Visha democracy and Sudra slavery built towns and castles round themselves, not only for defence against the foreign invader, but for fear of the rebellious toilers of the interior also. The antithesis of the town and country grows sharper.

Growing productivity and wealth on the basis of private property still further widens the chasm between the toiling Visha and the owning Brahma-Kshatra classes. The more the Vishas are impoverished, the nearer are they pushed to the conquered Sudras. Whereas formerly the Visha, as part of the conquering *Trivarna* Aryans, was glad and proud to possess the Sudra slave, the logic of private property and slavery had caught him into its net and pushed him also into slavery. The once proud Visha, who alone was the *Brahman*, the all-pervading commune, and was the source from which sprang out and demarcated the

<sup>6</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, etc., pp. 267-68. Parentheses mine—S. A. D.



Brahma-Kshatra *Varnas*, himself became impoverished and was sold in bondage, like the Sudras. The fact that he once belonged to the conquering Aryan only gave him the right to be born, married and buried according to *Vedic* rites. The alien Sudra slave could never be allowed to lift himself into that position. But while the Visha, thus in theory still belonged to the ruling aristocracy, in practice of daily life, the Visha had been hurled into the ranks of the Sudra slaves. The Aryan who once enslaved others and prospered, now himself could be bought and sold and enslaved. Having been reduced to slavery on earth, he only tried to reserve the Heaven for himself. But that too was soon to go. The ruling classes, led by the Brahmin, monopolised that also. Visha democracy was coming to an end on the earth first and in Heaven next.

The robber wars increased the power of the supreme military commander as well as of the sub-commanders. The customary election of successors from one family, especially after the introduction of father right, was gradually transformed into hereditary succession, first tolerated, then claimed and finally usurped; the foundation of hereditary royalty and hereditary nobility was laid. In this manner the organs of the gentile constitution were gradually torn from their roots in the people, in gens, phratry and tribe, and the whole gentile order was transformed into its opposite: from an organisation of tribes for the free administration of their own affairs it became an organisation for plundering and oppressing their neighbours; and correspondingly, its organs were transformed from instruments of the will of the people into independent organs for ruling and oppressing their own people.<sup>7</sup>

The Brahma-Kshatra begin to oppress the people, and while oppressing the exploited, go to war among themselves over the share of the spoils and the control of power to exploit. Formerly society was afraid of mixture of blood, *i.e.*, of kin-promiscuity; now a new fear haunts 'society,' *i.e.*, the ruling class, that of *Varnasankar*, the mixture of classes, the fear of the toiling Sudra slave and impoverished Vaisya overturning society and restoring the old *Gana* equality and collectivism, destroying private property of the exploiters, the rule of the patriarchs and kings. Then it would be the end of the world, the *Pralaya*, indeed! The ruling classes trembled. Wars flared up between

<sup>7</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, etc., p. 268.



the exploiters and exploited, the former trying to suppress and disarm once for all the remnants of the old *Gana* society of collectivism and equality, now surviving only through customs, traditions and religious rites, and the latter trying to prevent private property, riches, and kingly power of arms from raising themselves over the head of the toiling majority.



## CHAPTER XII

### GANA-SAMGHAS AS RECORDED BY PANINI, KAUTILYA, THE GREEKS AND OTHERS

WHERE and when did the Aryan *Ganas* undergo the development we have noted so far? Is there any recorded history to show that *Ganas* of the type we have mentioned did really exist and later on succumbed to invasions or civil war, giving rise to the later empires of Indian history? Let us take up these questions before proceeding further with the developments of the class struggles in the *Ganas*.

Chronological data on the early development of the *Ganas* is extremely uncertain. From the discovery of fire and cattle, *i.e.*, from the savagery of the Aryans to the growth of *Yajna* communes and their invention of smelting, weaving, exchange, division of labour in *Varnas*, rise of private property and Sudra slavery, a period of several hundred years seems to have elapsed. This may be inferred from the astronomical observations noted by the *Vedic Rishis* and the import of these observations as discussed by modern scholars—such as Tilak, Dixit, Ketkar, &c. It may be stated with some certainty that the Aryan *Ganas* developed *Varnas*, private property and Sudra slavery in their finished and stable form long after reaching India. Chronologically, it had taken place before the Mahabharata war, at the end of which, tradition says, the *Kali-yuga* began, and internal evidence of social organisation also bears out the statement.

When that branch of the Aryan communes which went towards the East broke from growing primeval commune in Central Asia, it had not developed agriculture, division of labour or a military leadership. The first to do so were the Asuras, who were the sister communes of the Devas. Tradition says that when the Asuras developed the cultivated plant, the Devas protested. But when they saw it actually bear corn they were



frightened and ran away. The Deva-Asura wars also tell us that the Devas were always behind the Asuras in technique and it is from them that they learned to develop a stable, skilled military leadership, after which alone they succeeded in defeating the Asuras. Thus it seems that when they separated from the primeval home, they were still matriarchal *Gana* communes, living in the *Yajna* mode of production.

It is in the territories of Afghanistan and especially of the Indus Valley and the South Himalayan regions of the Punjab that the Aryan *Ganas* developed *Varnas*, property, classes and slavery. The early *Vedic* activities refer to this region.

The invasions of the Aryan *Ganas* to the East did not take place all at once in a single wave, but were spread over several hundred years. Therefore, those who came later sometimes had to fight with those who had come and settled earlier. That explains why in the *Rigveda*, where India is generally held to be the leader of all Aryans, he is asked to help one Aryan *Gana* as against another. The writer of the hymn mentions both Aryans and Dasyus as his enemies in the verses and asks Indra's help.

The occupation of the Indus valley, the conquest of the original inhabitants, the development of *Varnas* and slavery seem to have been proceeding from about 3,000 B.C. to 2,000 B.C.

It is at the latter period that the various *Ganas* developed into military democracies or closed aristocracies, broke up their classless constitutions, and developed new forms of organisation to suit the development of property and slavery, *i.e.*, ushered in the State and class rule.

It is on the basis of the wealth of cattle, agriculture, handicrafts and the gains of the *Visha* and slave labour that they grew in wealth and power and spread further eastwards into the Gangetic Valley. It is at this stage that the *Ganas* break into civil wars, the *Varna* wars of Parashurama, Haihaya, &c.

It is after reaching the Gangetic Valley that the classical Hindu slave State becomes ripe for birth. It is then that the Mahabharata war takes place. This has occupied the period of 2,000 B.C. to 1,500 B.C. which is the latest date given for the Mahabharata war. Some give about 3,000 B.C. as the date of the Mahabharata war, which, however, is not generally accepted.

The Mahabharata war causes such mutual destruction that it is followed for some time by the absence of any strong State



anywhere. The growth of the slave States is arrested and the *Gana-Samghas* again get an opportunity to live. But it is only for a short while. Centralised semi-slave, semi-feudal States grow in the Gangetic Valley and swallow the *Gana-Samghas*. Some survive in the shelter of the Himalayas, the Vindhyas and the Indus Valley, away from the clutching hand of Pataliputra and Hastinapura. Some of them survive as late as the arrival of the Greeks under Alexander, whose chroniclers leave for us evidence of the fact that the *Gana-Samghas* we have been speaking of lived the way we described.

Apart from the evidence of the Greeks, we have the observations of writers of Indian antiquity also. Putting these together we can name some of the *Ganas* of antiquity and locate them. Some of them can even lead us to see those conditions which existed amongst them before the Mahabharata war, that is, before the final victory of the slave State.

In the very nature of things, one would not expect to find a *Gana* living in the primitive commune stage in later antiquity. But we do find mention of such a *Gana* actually living and living in a very happy way even in later antiquity. These *Ganas* were characterised as living in *Arajaka* conditions, which is vulgarly translated as anarchy. The writers of the slavery period and the protagonists of monarchy reserved the worst descriptions of such *Ganas*. But that abuse itself shows us the real characteristics of these *Ganas*. As noted before, the *Vairajya Ganas* are described by Kautilya's *Arthashastra* as societies where they do not observe 'mine' and 'thine'. The *Arajaka* is even worse. The *Mahabharata* assures us that when formerly all people lived in the *Arajaka* they perished by killing each other. Then they went to the Grandfather God who advised them to have a king to rule. But, it seems, some *Ganas* asked the Grandfather to keep the advice to himself and his monarchy for the slaves and continued to live in *Arajaka*. The *Acharanga Jaina Sutras* mention the existence of *Ganas* of the following kinds: *Arayani*, *Ganarayani*, *Juvarayani*, *Do-rajani*, *Ve-rajani* and *Viruddha-rajani*. Of these six types of *Ganas*, we shall first notice the *Aryani*, i.e., the *Arajaka*, or anarcho-society. The characteristic of these *Ganas* was that they had no private property, no classes, no slavery and exploitation. Hence the hatred of Kautilya and the *Mahabharata* for them. They still worked together and dined together in the



old way. That form of society is described for us by the *Atharva-veda*, in which all the *Gana* members are told:

...Do Ye come here cooperating, going along the same wagon pole, speaking agreeable to one another!...Identical shall be your drink, in common shall be your share of food. I yoke you together in the same traces.\* (Bloomfield's translation.)

Such a society was actually found by the Jaina traveller, as noted above, in the South of India, and by the Greek historian of Alexander, who says that they were a prosperous people. The citizens took their meals in common, as described by the *Atharvaveda*.<sup>1</sup> 'They regard the excessive pursuit of any art, as war, for instance, and the like, as wickedness.' (Strabo, XV, 34, quoted by Jayaswal). These people are named 'Musicians' by the Greeks and they have been identified as Muchikarnika.

That only a few *Arajaka Ganas* should have survived in history is quite natural in view of the terrific destructive power of the slave States and private property that was swallowing the primitive communes in India.

The next type in importance are those *Ganas* who had the *Vairajya* constitution. This was again a *Gana* which had not developed the State monarchy. But it had developed the *Varna* division of labour, property differences and even patriarchal slavery. The *Aitareya Brahmana* and the *Yajurveda* mention the existence of people living under the *Vairajya* constitution of society.

They were Uttarkurus and Uttarmadras of the North as well as some others in the South. The habitat of these Kurus and Madras was the Himavat—the Himalayan regions.

What was the characteristic of these Kurus and Madras? There, 'the whole *Janapada*<sup>2</sup> was crowned as ruler'—i.e., it was

\* ज्यायस्वन्तश्चित्तिनो मावि यौष्ट संराधयन्तः साधुराश्चरन्तः ।

अन्यो अन्यस्मै वल्गु वदन्त एव संधीचीनान्वः संमनसस्कृणोमि ।

समानी प्रपा सहवोऽन्नभागः समाने योक्त्वा सह वो युनज्मि । अथर्व ३-३०-५-६

<sup>1</sup> Common meals of a whole *Gana* are not just social picnics but the necessary part of the primitive commune life, where private property and slavery has not arisen.

<sup>2</sup> '*Janapada*' is ordinarily translated as 'people' which is not quite correct. In the early period it meant the original tribal *Gana* members as distinguished from the new Sudra slaves and other aliens.



a democracy. But whose democracy? Was it the old natural *Gana* democracy? No. This democracy of the Kurus and Madras is called *Vairajya*, not simply because the *Janapada* is crowned; but because, according to the writer of the *Purushasukta*, quite a new special kind of society had been under construction under the *Vairajya* constitution. What is the new speciality? So long they had only three *Varna* divisions—now they find the fourth, the *Sudra Varna*. Having found it, the Uttarkurus expand and prosper and begin to occupy the whole earth. They become *Virat*. They are taking the first step towards the State, the State of the *Trivarna* rich over the *Sudra* slave. That is the new form the *Purusha* (i.e., the *Gana* multitude) is assuming in the *Purushasukta*. The Vedic writer is in ecstasy that in this new form, prosperity and growth came by leaps and bounds. The *Purushasukta* is the song of the Aryan slave-owner, who has just found slavery and prospered, though he was a patriarch still, himself and his family working alongside the *Sudra*. Thus the *Vairajya Gana* democracy is already a closed aristocracy where the assembly of the people rules, but the people, i.e., *Janapada*, does not include the *Sudras* and hence are a closed aristocracy in relation to them, and later even the poor Aryan *Vaisya* is thrown out of the folds of the privileged *Dwija* aristocracy.

The next stage from *Vairajya* or alongside of it is the *Swarajya* organisation, described by the *Aitareya Brahmana* and prevailing in Western India. It is that *Gana* constitution in which the *Gana* has become now too big to function as a whole and, therefore, elects a council of elders to carry on the collective work in their *Sabha*. These houses of elders inside the framework of a *Gana* or confederacy of *Ganas*, become during course of time the hereditary and permanent nobility. That is why we find the *Gana* defined later on as a union of *Kulas* or families.\* What is the content of *Swarajya*? It does not mean self-rule at all, though the literal meaning is so.—It means the leadership that is elected and consecrated to manage the affairs of the *Gana* and has the right to function *on its own*. It becomes 'elder'. The elected *Swarat* who formerly was on a level of

\* कुलानां हि समूहस्तु गणः संघिकीर्तितः । ( वीर मित्रोदय )



equality with the *Gana* members, now becomes their elder or superior—as the *Taittiriya Brahamana* describes it.\*

It can be seen from this that as the primitive commune begins to change its pristine character and develop private property and classes, rich and poor, freemen and slaves, it ceases to be the old natural democracy, the commune of the days of Indra and the gods. It begins to develop new organs to conduct its affairs, gradually approaching that stage where the class contradictions become furious, break into violent struggles and ultimately establish that instrument of class rule, this State. Already these *Ganas* are giving up the language of the *Gana-Gotras* and speaking of *Rajyam*, a territorial political unit embracing both the *Gana* members and aliens.

In the early days of *Gana* commune when the *Gana* was small, the whole *Visha* met together and administered its affairs. When they had to elect a leader for war, the *Visha* as a whole elected him. As war became a profession and the elected leadership got the character of more or less permanency, the *Visha* assembly, which was called the *Samiti* or *Narishta*, was replaced by the *Sabha*. The elected leadership, however, did not become a hereditary monarchy, but a privileged aristocracy. Its power, however, was derived from election and the elected leader still had to take the consecration from the *Gana*. When the *Gana* develops private property, *Varnas* and slavery, it becomes a *Rajyam*, and the leadership elected 'to rule' becomes *Rajans*.

The aristocratic *Kulas* form into *Rajakulas*. When the class struggles were fought out during the course of history and the slave-owners became victorious, one of the members of the *Rajakulas*, i.e., the biggest owner of the *Sudras* and land, became the hereditary monarch. The election ceremony then changes its character, though the same old ceremony with a few changes is made to serve the purpose of the coronation of the monarch. In the *Samiti*, it was the fulfilled democracy of the *Gana* that functioned; in the *Sabha*, the narrow ring, though elected, of the

\* एतस्यां प्रतीच्यां दिशि ये के च नीच्यानां राजानो येऽपाच्यानां स्वराज्ययैव  
तेऽभिषिच्यन्ते स्वराड् इत्येनान् अभिषिक्तान् आचक्षत ( ऐ. ब्रा. ८-४ )  
य एव विद्वान् बाजपेयेन यजति । गच्छति स्वराज्यम् ।  
अग्रं समानानां पर्येति । तिष्ठन्तेऽस्मै ज्येष्ठ्याय । ( तै. ब्रा. १-३-२-२ )



heads of the propertied families that function. When the town and the country separate, handicrafts and trade, on one side, and agriculture, on the other, begin to bifurcate and form different centres of gravitation of production, exchange and property, the *Janapada* and *Paura* come into existence—the *Janapada* for the agrarian centres of property and the *Paura* for the rich handicraft-guilds and the merchants, who of course gravitate round the town and the monarch's court. When *Janapada* and *Paura* replace the *Samiti-Sabha*, the *Gana* has ended, the State is already in being, ruling for the benefit of the exploiting class over the exploited. This class character of the *Janapada* and *Paura* is generally not seen by our historians.

In the works of Panini, the great grammarian, who lived after the Mahabharata war, and in those chapters of the *Mahabharata* which were written in the comparatively later period, we find people living in the *Gana* way; but we find the *Ganas* involved in furious struggles of the propertied *Kulas* amongst themselves for supremacy and all of them against the *Gana* democracy as a whole.

Panini mentions several confederacies of *Gana* or *Gana-Samghas*, as he calls them, and classifies them by two names. Some he calls as *Ayudhajivin Samghas*.\* These are later on mentioned by Kautilya as *Shastropajivin*\*\*—both having the same meaning. The *Ayudhajivins* are also mentioned by another name—*Vartta-Shastropajivin*.† This category of *Ganas* is contrasted with another category called the *Rajashabdopajivin*.†† The social organisation denoted by these epithets has not been properly presented by any commentator—not even by Jayaswal, whose great work it was that put all these *Ganas* on their feet in the framework of Indian history writing. No doubt these descriptions do signify a form of socio-economic or socio-political organisation of the *Ganas*. But, it appears, the exact difference between these two and all of them with the ancient *Ganas* has not been grasped.

\* आयुधजीविसंघः

\*\* शास्त्रोपजीवी

† वार्त्ताशास्त्रोपजीवी

†† राजशब्दोपजीवी



*Ayudhajivin* and *Shastropajivin Samghas* mean *Ganas* in which the *Gana* still retained the old characteristic of all its members being armed. But why is this mentioned as a special characteristic of social organisation? It means that the *Gana* members had not evolved class rule and the permanent class divisions, in which only the ruling class possessed the power of arms or the standing army as against the disarmed mass of the toilers, over whom such a class rules; it means a *Gana* in which the elected leadership had not yet become the exclusively armed hereditary nobility. The writers of the monarchical class State were bound to be struck with this characteristic of the *Gana*. It was a military democracy. It was, however, no longer in that absolutely classless condition of the most ancient communes. Property differences had penetrated it. Agriculture (*Vartta*), trade, money, wealth and patriarchal slavery had come into its fold, but the class contradictions had not become so acute as to have been completely fought out to the annihilation and disarming of the poor toiling Aryan Vishas. All toiled in the *Gana* and all, *except the Sudra slaves*, bore arms; and the rich were elected to the leadership of the armed toiling *Gana*. That is the *Vartta-Shastropajivin* or *Ayudhajivin Samgha* we meet in Indian history almost up to 300 B.C. The names of some of the *Samghas* are given as follows: 1. The Vrika, 2. The Damani 'and others', 3-8. This confederacy of the six Trigarttas (the six members of this confederacy being: Kaundoparatha, Dandaki, Kraushtaki, Jalamani, Brahmagupta, Janaki)\*, 9. The Yaudheya and others, 10. Parshva and others, 11. Kshudraka, 12. Malaya, 13. Katha, 14. Saubhuti, 15. Shibi, 16. Patala, 17. Bhagala, 18. Kambhoja, 19. Surashtra, 20. Kshatriya, 21. Shreni, 22. Brahmanak, 23. Ambashtha.

It may be seen here that under the pressure of the strong slave States of the Gangetic Valley and the growing agriculture and trade economy of the *Ganas* themselves, they were forming several confederacies for self-preservation, war and growth. But history had doomed them to extinction at the hands of the slave-owners' States of the 'orthodox' Aryans of the Gangetic Valley.

Where were most of these *Ganas* located? Panini locates

\* आहुस्त्रिगर्तषष्ठास्तु कौण्डोपरथ दण्डकी ।

क्रौष्टकि जालमानिश्च ब्रह्मगुप्तोऽथ जानकिः ॥



them in what is called the Vahika country, *i.e.*, the Indus Valley, from the Punjab to down south in Sindh. The Kshudrakas and Malavas were near Sindh, the six Trigarttas were near about Jammu, in the Himalayan districts. We might say the whole of the west and south-west India, as far as the belt touching the Vindhya, was occupied by the military democracies of the above *Gana-Samghas*, declaring to history by their record that the State based on violence of one class, the dictatorship of slave-owners and private property, whether wearing the monarchical or republican robes, had to fight for several hundred years before it could swallow the whole of India. The internal cohesion and unity of the *Gana-Samghas*, even though getting impaired by property differences and slavery, was yet so formidable that the conquering Greeks of Alexander had to face defeat at their hands on the banks of the Indus. And where they surrendered to Alexander, it was because the propertied classes, already becoming powerful in these *Ganas*, preferred peace with the invader to war and total annihilation, if necessary.

Writing of the Saubhuti and Katha *Ganas*, the Greeks say that their women still married by their own choice, (perhaps, meaning *Gandharva* and *Swayamvara*). They prized strength and beauty amongst their members. And the writer notes the following about the way the children were reared:

Here they do not acknowledge and rear children according to the will of the parents but as the officers entrusted with the medical inspection of parents may direct, for if they have marked anything deformed or defective in the limbs of the child they order it to be killed.

This could only be possible in a *Gana* where the population, due to absence of extreme forms of poverty, on one side, and riches, on the other, normally bred healthy children, where defective birth was an exception, where the rights of private property, family and inheritance had not become totally paramount over the interests of the *Gana*, where under the pressure of war and the backwardness of resources and technique of production of the barbarian age, such precautions had to be taken in order to rear soldiers.

That the property differences and consequently class differences had overtaken the *Gana-Samghas*, when we meet them in Panini, Kautilya and the Greeks, is quite evident. These differ-



ences were even fixed into the language structure. The free citizen of the Mallas was called Malavah, but the Sudra slave and artisan was called differently as Malavyah. The Yaudheyas had vested the management of the *Gana-Samgha* in a council of five thousands representatives. But who could be a representative? One, who, when elected, supplied the *Gana* with an elephant. Thus the elephant-men and non-elephant-men already showed that the *Gana-Samgha* had been divided into rich and poor. The effect was seen in the Ambashthas, who are reported to have surrendered to Alexander on the advice of these rich elders, as against the voice of the others. Selfish private property always surrenders the nation to the invaders in order to preserve its own class interests.

The second category of *Gana-Samgha* mentioned in recorded history are those known as *Rajashabdopajivin*. These are *Ganas* where differentiation of property and organisation of tribal wars have gone to such an extent and the commune democracy has weakened so much that the customarily elected leadership of the *Ganas* has transformed itself into a hereditary nobility. Only the houses of this nobility now can be elected to the ruling councils. These houses are the *Rajans* of the *Gana-Samghas*; and the *Rajans* were not necessarily the generals or leaders of the army. The best known of these *Rajan-Ganas* are the Lichhavi, Malla, Sakya, Maurya, Kukara, Kuru, Panchala, &c. The Andhaka-Vrishnis of the famous Krishna of the *Mahabharata* also joined their ranks later on. Some branches of the famous Kurus and Madras, who with their *Vairajya* constitution became, so to say, the founders of the slavery of the Sudras, became *Rajanya Gana-Samghas*, developing first a hereditary nobility and later the monarchical slave States which culminated in the Bharata war. Some branches of the Madras, however, seem to have remained behind and stuck to their loose division of labour and not a very pronounced property and class differentiation. They, therefore, paid the penalty to the slave-owning writers of the *Smritis* and the *Shanti Parva*, who warn all decent Brahmins from going to the country of the Madras and Vahikas. The special sin of the Vahikas and the Madras is that there men change their *Varna* in rotation, some day one is a Brahmin, next a Kshatriya, then a Vaisya, then a Sudra and again a Brahmin. Their women have freedom, and all drink;



eat and are merry. This is certainly 'sinful' according to the culture of the slave-owners, who alone can have the monopoly of pleasure and freedom, riding on the backs of their Sudra slaves!

In history, we also find one example of a whole *Gana* becoming a closed 'hateful aristocracy', as Engels calls it, against the other inhabitants of the territory. It is the Licchavi *Gana* of Vaisali. The Licchavis had 7,707 *Rajans* living in the city of Vaisali, who were the ruling class, who alone elected the executives and officials to administer and rule. But the total population of citizens was 1,68,000, divided into two classes, the 'outer citizens' and 'inner citizens,' the latter being the Vaisaliyans.

From these few examples it can be seen that the *Gana* communes of ancient days and the later development of classes and class contradictions among them, leading to changes in their organisational structure and ideological make-up, are a fact of Indian history and not a fiction.



## CHAPTER XIII

### SANGUINARY WARS AND THE RISE OF THE STATE AND DANDA

THE violent struggle of private property to become the ruling class was already foreshadowed in the *Deva Satra* story of the war between gods and Vishnu referred to before. The inconclusive stage of that development could not remain where it was. The dialectics of productive forces would not permit it. According to Bhishma, who all along has been telling us in the frankest terms the sordid story of the fall of commune, when exchange and private property, greed and accumulation grew in the ancient commune, it split into hostile forces and fierce struggle ensued. The gods were disturbed. The reason of the disturbance of the gods is very peculiar. These gods, who were none else but mortals like others, were disturbed because they were being reduced to 'equality with mortals.' They went to Brahma, the Creator. It is interesting to note here that while in the early narration, Bhishma tells us that the *Brahman* had perished due to conflicts, only four lines later, the gods visit Brahma to find the way out. This Brahma is the mythical Creator, not the *Brahman*-commune. What is the outcome of this confabulation, this arbitration, if it can be so called, of the Divine regulator? He gave the gods a new constitution to order the world. In the old one, the people lived in a self-acting *Dharma*, mutually protecting each other. There was no force of one class over another to regulate their relations, no *Danda*, no State, no kings. They were not necessary *then*. What was the essence of the new constitution? The new relations of economy and family were upheld by force or violence, called the '*Danda*'. Now *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, a new trio, the *Trivarga*, could not function automatically but had to be regulated by *Danda*. This



first constitution of the slave-owners' State in India\* was called by the name of Vishalaksha; and the *Mahabharata* says that it underwent modifications at the hands of Bahudantaka, Brihaspati and Kavi.

Though this new class rule of the slave-owners based on violence was sanctified by the blessings of the Divine Creator, it remained still unstable. Hardly had five or six kings ruled than a fresh conflict broke out. It seems, this time it was led by one of the kings himself who walked over to the camp of the Visha democracy against the Brahma-Kshatra class. King Vena revolted against the new order and fought the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Vena was assisted and advised in this venture by his intelligent wife, Suneeta, who most probably was fretting at the overthrow of matriarchy and the democracy of the woman. But, however great may be Suneeta and Vena, the new social forces could not reverse their steps back into an epoch which was dead for ever, the epoch of the primitive commune. What Vena and his likes could achieve was to rudely shake the ruling classes and soften the harshness of exploitation until the productive forces ripened for another revolution. But that could not be yet. The historical role of slavery had not been exhausted. The clearing up of vast forest lands, agriculture and handicrafts, exchange and trade, had vast capacity to grow within the framework of slavery, which had only just begun. Vena was defeated and killed by the Brahmins. The *Ganas* and tribes which had helped Vena from outside also seem to have been subjugated in this battle. The story of *Mahabharata* says that the Brahmins having killed Vena rubbed the various parts of his body from which issued fierce black-headed, red-eyed Nishadas and others. From Vena's right hand rose a man, who, however, bowed to the Brahmins and agreed to do their bidding. He was crowned as king Prithu Vainya. The war was over for the time being.

What is the outcome and what was the bidding of the Brah-

\* ततोऽध्यायसहस्राणां शतं चक्रे स्वबुद्धिजम् ।

यत्तु धर्मस्तथैवार्थः कामश्चैवानुवर्णितः ॥ २६

त्रिवर्ग इति विख्यातो गण एष स्वयंभुवा । ३०

त्रिवर्गश्चैव दाण्डजः । महाभारत—शान्ति ३१



mins? Prithu, son of Vena, agreed to abide by the voice of the Brahmins, put the ruling class above law\* and vowed that he would never permit any attempts to obliterate the class distinctions. The Hindu theory of the rise of the State tells us that from that time on *Danda*, force, began to rule the world.

The victory of the slave-owners and the suppression of the Visha democracy was followed by tremendous exploitation and economic development. Vast tracts of land were brought under cultivation and for the first time boundaries of *territorial States* came into existence, in which not only the Aryans lived but also aliens, the Nishadas, Suta-Magadhas\*\*, &c. Prithu Vainya is credited with the most extensive development of agriculture and spread of varieties of cultivated plants.† *Land and slaves, the new principal means of production, oust the old PRAJA-PASHAVAH, cattle and free men, and the RAJAN-State, based on violent exploitation of one class by another, ousts the GANA commune, based on peaceful cooperation.*

The fight of the irreconcilable contradictions, thus gave birth to the *Rajyam*, the State, which naturally belonged to the economically dominant class, hence to the Brahma-Kshatra, who henceforth disarmed, suppressed and exploited the great Visha democracy and Sudra slavery. The ruling classes now pour forth their injunction on the defeated democracy in the name of divine order. The keynote of all existence henceforth is fear inspired by force, exercised by the State, by *Danda*. Mutual cooperation, peace and love have vanished in the welter of private property, greed and violence of the slave-owning classes. Where-

\* अदण्डया द्विजाश्चेति प्रतिजानीष्व चाभिभो ।

लोकं च संकरात् कृत्स्नं तातास्मीति परंतप ॥ शान्ति ५८-११७

\*\* तस्मान्निषादाः संभूता क्रूराः शैलवनाश्रयः ।

ये चान्ये विन्ध्यनिलयाः म्लेच्छाः शतसहस्रशः ॥ १०६

प्रीतो राजा ददौ.....

अनूपदेशं सूताय मगधं मगधाय च ॥ शान्ति ५८-१२२

† समतां वसुधायाश्च स सम्यगुदपादयत् ।

वैषम्यं हि परं भूमेरिति नः परमा श्रुतिः ॥ १२३

मन्वन्तरेषु सर्वेषु विषमा जायते मही ।

उज्जहार ततो वैश्यः शिलाजालान्समन्ततः ॥ १२४

तेनेयं पृथिवी दुग्धा सस्यानि दशसप्त च ॥ शान्ति ५८



as formerly people were put on the right course and conduct by mere word, by just public opinion, and punishment was only public censure (*Dhigdanda*), now people have to be driven by the violence of the State, the army and police, into exploitation, into loyalty and respect towards ruling private property. If they failed, execution (*Vadhadanda*), the extreme penalty of the law, was the punishment. With the birth of the State, Hindu literature begins to sing the praises of this new apparatus of violence. If this violence were not there, if the *Arajak*, Stateless, society were to reappear, property would vanish, family would collapse, religion would perish and the world come to an end. In the name of property, family and religion, the ruling classes violated the freedom, property and family of the toiling Vishas and the enslaved Sudras. In the name of *Yajnas* and *Dana*, the Brahma-Kshatra rulers now expropriated the cattle and wealth of the masses and grabbed the vast lands brought into cultivation by the Vaisya-Sudra toilers. Defeated and disarmed during the prolonged struggles, the toiling humanity was forced into submission and accepted the new order. But it revolted again and again, was again defeated and enslaved, until new productive forces and new revolutionary forces arose from within itself. To the war against the toilers was also added the internal class conflicts among the ruling classes, the struggles of the Brahma and Kshatra houses to expropriate each other's gains of exploitation of the Vaisyas and Sudras. Hindu mythology is full of the feuds of Parashurama against the Kshatriyas, of the feuds of Haihaya, Sahasrarjuna, Vaitahavya, Srinjaya, Nausha, and several others. The vast *Ashramas* of the Brahmins with their hundreds of acres of land and cattle, apprentice workers (as disciples) and Vaisya-Sudra 'followers,' producing wealth for them, sprawl across the pages of Hindu history, blowing up the fairy tales of Brahmin mendicancy, poverty, uprightness, etc. The tales of the Kshatriya houses is a self-admitted record of exploitation and expropriation of the people in the name of governing society and protecting it from 'destruction', *i.e.*, from external invasion and internal class revolution. It is not our purpose here to go into the history of kings and dynasties, their good or bad record, or into the history of famous Brahmin families who built vast landed estates of *Ashramas*, fought battles, became generals and chieftains of vast armies or even rulers of States. We, there-



fore, leave aside for the present the sifting of that well-known record and reducing it to intelligible history in the light of the historical laws of development we have been showing in the foregoing. We shall only see the new organisation of the Aryan society that came out of the fierce class struggles among the members of the dying *Ganas* of antiquity.

Why was *Gana* society forced to give up its gentile constitution and submit, though under duress, to the new organisation of *Rajyam*, the State? In what essentials did the *Rajya* differ from the *Gana*? The historical process that led to this has been summed up by Engels as follows:

Let us now see what became of the gentile constitution as a result of this social revolution. It stood powerless in face of the new elements that had grown up without its aid. It was dependent on the condition that the members of a gens, or, say, of a tribe, should live together in the same territory, be its sole inhabitants. This had long ceased to be the case. Gentes and tribes were everywhere commingled; everywhere slaves, dependants and foreigners lived among the citizens.\* The sedentary state, which had been acquired only towards the end of the middle stage of barbarism, was time and again interrupted by the mobility and changes of abode upon which commerce, changes of occupation and the transfer of land were conditioned. The members of the gentile organisation could no longer meet for the purpose of attending to their common affairs [which they formerly did in the meeting of their *Samiti* or *Narishta*]; only matters of minor importance, such as religious ceremonies, were still observed, indifferently. Beside the wants and interests which the gentile organs were appointed and fitted to take care of, new wants and interests had arisen from the revolution in the conditions of earning one's living and the resulting change in social structure. These new wants and interests were not only alien to the old gentile order, but thwarted it in every way. The interests of the groups of craftsmen created by division of labour, and the special needs of the town as opposed to the country, required

\* षौण्डूकाश्चौडूद्रविडाः काम्बोजयवनाः शकाः ।

पारदा पल्हवश्चीनाः किराताः दरदाः स्वशाः ॥ मनु २०-४४

A contact with the aliens had to be purified by performing *Punashstoma Yajna*.

आरुद्रान् कारस्कारान् पुण्ड्रान् सौवीरान् ।

वंग कलिंगान् प्राणूनान् इति च गत्वा

पुनश्चोमेन यजेत सर्वपृष्ठया वा । बोधायन १-२-१४



new organs [such as *Janapada* and *Paura*]; but each of these groups was composed of people from different gentes, phratries and tribes; they even included aliens. Hence, the new organs necessarily had to take form outside the gentile constitution, parallel with it, and that meant against it. And again, in every gentile organisation the conflict of interests made itself felt and reached its apex by combining rich and poor, usurers and debtors, in the same gens and tribe. Then there was the mass of new inhabitants, strangers to the gentile associations, which, as in Rome [Vaisali, Magadha, Patala, &c.], could become a power in the land, and was too numerous to be gradually absorbed by the consanguine gentes and tribes. The gentile associations confronted these masses as exclusive, privileged bodies; what had originally been a naturally-grown democracy was transformed into a hateful aristocracy [visible even as late as in the Malla-Lichhavi *Ganas* of Buddha's times]. Lastly, the gentile constitution had grown out of a society that knew no internal antagonisms, and was adapted only for such a society. It had no coercive power except public opinion. But now a society had come into being that by the force of all its economic conditions of existence had to split up into freemen and slaves, into exploiting rich and exploited poor; a society that was not only incapable of reconciling these antagonisms, but had to drive them more and more to a head. Such a society could only exist either in a state of continuous, open struggle of these classes against one another or under the rule of a third power which, while ostensibly standing above the classes struggling with each other, suppressed their *open* conflict and permitted a class struggle at most in the economic field, on a so-called legal form. The gentile constitution had outlived its usefulness. It was burst asunder by the division of labour and by its result, the division of society into classes. Its place was taken by the *state* . . . .

The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea,' 'the image and reality of reason,' as Hegel maintains [and also the ancient and modern Hindu writers maintain]. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contraction with itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel.<sup>1</sup>

What were the characteristics of this new organ of class

<sup>1</sup> *The Origin of Family*, etc., pp. 273-77. Parentheses mine—S.A.D.



society, the *Rajyam*, State, which distinguished it from the old *Gana-Gotra* organisation?

In contrast to the old gentile organisation, the State is distinguished firstly by the grouping of its members *on a territorial basis*. The old gentile bodies, formed and held together by ties of blood, had become inadequate largely because they presupposed that the gentile members were bound to one particular locality, whereas this had long ceased to be the case. The territory was still there but the people had become mobile. The territorial division was, therefore, taken as the starting point and the system introduced by which citizens exercised their public rights and duties where they took up residence, without regard to gens or tribe. This organisation of the citizens of the State according to domicile is common to all States. To us, therefore, this organisation seems natural; but hard and protracted struggles were necessary before it was able to displace the old organisation founded on kinship—to displace the *Gana* and replace it by the *Rajyam*.

The second distinguishing characteristic is the institution of a *public force*, which is no longer immediately identical with the people organising themselves as an armed power. This special public force is needed because a self-acting armed organisation of the people has become impossible since their cleavage into classes. The kings now keep the standing army and the police to execute the law, the essence of which is to hold the exploited class to the bonds of exploitation, of labour. The *Chaturanga Sena*, the *Rajpurushas*, the rights of the Kshatriya and Brahmin houses alone to bear arms and to form the command of the army, now appear on the historical scene. This public force consists not merely of armed men but also of its material appendages, such as prisons, courts, and coercive institutions of all kinds, the essence of them all being *Danda*. The old gentile society, living without class antagonisms, had no need for *Shastra*, the laws of coercion, or the mode of dictatorship of one class over another. *Shastra* is a product of class society. Hence it comes into existence with the rise of slavery and is associated with kings of the slave States. It is, therefore, properly defined as an instrument of coercion, suppression, and the *Apastamba Dharma Sutras* frankly state that 'where work or functioning



proceeds from liking (and not from dislike or antagonism), there is no *Shashtra*.\*

In order to maintain this public power, contributions from the State citizens—taxes—are necessary. These were completely unknown to gentile society. The *Ganas* and their *Ganapati* chiefs knew of *Danam*, free distribution of all that is produced. But they did not have that subtle robbery of the people in the interests of the ruling classes expounded in the *Arthashastras* under the name of *Karbhara*. The *Mahabharata* wants to make the robbery as smooth and painless as the biting of the rat when it draws blood from a sleeping man, who never feels it till he wakes up next day.\*\*

In possession of public power and the right of taxation (the right of the king State to one-sixth of the product), the officials now present themselves as organs of society standing *above* society. Representatives of a power which estranges them from society, they have to be given prestige by means of special decrees which invest them with a peculiar sanctity and inviolability. Further, in most historical States the rights conceded to citizens are graded on a property basis, whereby it is directly admitted that the State is an organisation for the protection of the possessing class against the non-possessing class. The *Paura-Janapada* assemblies of the king States were mostly formed of the propertied citizens, when the slave States became mature enough, and the most fruitful advice was given to the ruling king—'Respect and adore always the propertied class.†

Thus the growth of the productive forces changed the production relations, created private property and class antagonism between the exploiters and exploited, and gave birth to that affliction of human society, the State, the instrument of the exploiting class for violent suppression of the exploited class, in the name of 'saving society.'

\* यत्न तु प्रीति उपलब्धितः प्रवृत्तिः न तत्र शास्त्रम् अस्ति । आपस्तम्ब ४-१२-११  
And Jaimini in *Poorvamimamsa* says :

यस्मिन् प्रीतिः पुरुषस्य तस्य लिप्सा लक्षणाविभक्तत्वात् ।

\*\* यथा शल्यकवानारवुः पदं धूनयते सदा ।

अतीक्ष्णेनाभ्युपायेन तथा राष्ट्रं समापिबेत् ॥ शान्ति ८८-६

† धनिनः पूजयेन्नित्यं । शान्ति २६

The Mahajanas or Mahajanikas of the *Katyayana Shrauta Sutras* include, in later history, even the Nishadas, who formerly were either to be annihilated or enslaved, if they had acquired riches.



## CHAPTER XIV

# THE MAHABHARATA WAR—THE CIVIL WAR OF SLAVE-OWNERS AND GANA-SAMGHAS

THE classical holy land where Aryan empires struggled to grow on the basis of slavery is the Gangetic Valley. From the Kurukshetra in the west to Pataliputra (Patna in modern Bihar) in the east was the stretch of land in which the confederacies of Aryan *Ganas* grew into stable, rich, monarchical slave States, before Mahabharata war. North to south they had extended from the foot of the Himalayas to Avanti in modern Central India, and some had succeeded in penetrating the Vindhya range and establishing themselves as far as Vidarbha.

It may as well be remembered here that India at that time was neither known as Hindusthan nor Sindhustan, which is the same thing. Hindusthan is a name that the country had received from the river Sindhu. The Saka-Pahlava and other tribes of Middle Asia, who entered this country in the comparatively modern period, via the Sindhu river, named the country after the river. The letter 'S' among these people is pronounced as 'H' and thus the name stuck to the country. The ancient writers and peoples named the land where they lived after the name of the tribe or nation that occupied it—such as Matsya Desha, the country of the Matsyas. *The Bhishma Parva* of the *Mahabharata* mentions 200 such names. When later on territorial States came into existence, and dynasties with their capital cities were founded, the naming of the land became subject to the will of the ruling houses and such other factors. But generally most parts of India got their names from the name of the dominant nation or confederacy of *Ganas* that occupied, cultivated and ruled it—such as Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Kirata, Dravida, Kamboja, Matsya, Kuru, Dadra, Vahika, &c. It is interesting also to note that except for the Sindhu, no modern name of a river



has succeeded in naming a country after itself. Even the famous holy Ganges did not get that chance.

The name Bharata Varsha is derived from Bharata, the son of Dushyanta in the *Gana-Samghas* of Pururavas. It was just about that time that territorial States with hereditary monarchy had begun to come into existence and primitive democracies were fast disappearing in the holocaust of the rising slave States. But even this name, from Bharata of the Purus, becomes current when the Purus of Hastinapura (founded by Hastin, who was fifth in the line from Bharata) had tried to destroy the surrounding kingdoms, military democracies and *Gana-Samghas*, and, in the attempt to build the biggest slave empire of that period, landed themselves in the Bharata war, with its disastrous results. Manu and other law-givers of the Hindu feudal States speak of Madhyadesha, Brahmarshidesha and Aryavarta but even there they do not go beyond the east-west Gangetic Valley (excluding Banga) or beyond the Vindhyas in the South. Therefore, the conception of Hindusthan embracing the whole of India, as we understand it in the modern period, is solely a product of our era of civilisation. Neither the Kurus nor the Purus, neither Rama of the house of Ayodhya nor Krishna Vasudeva of the Andhaka-Vrishni *Gana-Samghas*, ever gave any name to this country.

Ancient Indian history most decisively breaks off with the Bharata war. All ancient history of India thus can be divided into the pre-Bharata and post-Bharata periods. Every tradition—popular, historical, mythical—agrees that that was an event in history which changed the whole course of development and ushered in a new epoch. Tradition sums it up by saying that the present *Kaliyuga*—*Kali* era—began with the Bharata war. Why does tradition say so and why is all ancient traditional history in India so persistent in taking this event as the turning-point of history? In chronological sequence, the Rama-Ravana war is prior to the Bharata war by about five hundred years. But unfortunately the true historical conditions of that period are not available with that detail and truth which is found regarding the Bharata war. The *Ramayana* of Valmiki is a very recent compilation and is a poetical composition representative of the post-Bharata feudal India, pouring the ideological make-up of the feudal period into the Rama-Ravana war. In fact, Valmiki seems to have found the Bharata epic heroes inconvenient for



his ideology and seized upon a hero about whose period and life anything could be said, since nothing definite was remembered in popular memory. And when Valmiki is trying to make an idealist hero and God out of his king, he fails, and only a loving youth, transformed into an oppressive builder of a kingdom, stands out in the poem. The so-called truthfulness of Valmiki's hero stands exposed when he treacherously kills Vali; his humanity is belied when he kills a Sudra for trying to liberate himself by becoming a cultured Aryan. Even his ideal monogamy is questioned by tradition, thus the *Jaina Sutras* say that Rama lived in the period when primitives had not yet prohibited brother-sister marriage and that Seeta was Rama's sister. Even Valmiki could not suppress the fact that she was '*Ayonija*'—i.e., not born in the house!

It is for these reasons that the Rama-Ravana war cannot be taken as a milestone in ancient history. But even with the scanty references available, it can be stated that the Raghus of Ayodhya in the time of Dasharatha, Rama's father, had come to the end of the pristine *Gana* democracy. The succession of Rama to the seat of rulership held by Dasharatha is formerly subject to the sanction of the assembly of the Raghus of Ayodhya; but already the signs of hereditary *Rajan*-ship or monarchy are visible in the formality. The Sudra slave and his violent suppression at the hands of the Raghu ruling class, the tremendous drive which Rama carried out against the surrounding free tribal *Ganas*, by utilising their internal rivalries, tell us that whatever the religious value and content Rama's worship may have for the sinful rich and the afflicted poor and whatever the different uses to which his godhood has been put to in medieval and modern history, the kingdom of Dasharathi Rama in the pre-Bharata era was one the first rising slave kingdoms of the Gangetic Valley.

The house of Rama, though living longest in history, got overshadowed by the rise of the house of the Purus of Hastinapura. There was also the famous kingdoms of Kashi, Magadha, Videha, and the Yadavas of Mathura. By matrimonial alliances or war, the various *Rajan* families of the Gangetic Valley were coalescing into bigger kingdoms, ripening into absolute imperial systems. A picture of these can be obtained from the dynasties described in the various *Puranas*, especially the *Harivamsha* and the rich traditions of the *Mahabharata*. *Gana-Samghas* like the



Andhaka-Vrishnis, also described as Satvatas and Yadavas, who have contributed Krishna to religious and social history of India, were being forced into war, defeat and migration (as at the hands of Shishupala). The Yadavas migrated to the west, with their whole *Gana-Samgha*. The *Rajan* families went to war with each other, a thing unheard of and considered most sinful in the old *Gana* democracy. Kamsa of Mathura, Jarasandha of Magadha and the Kauravas of Hastinapura were attempting to become big empire builders, overthrowing all vestiges of the old tribal military democracy and establishing absolute hereditary kingships, amassing wealth, land and slaves, by a furious war with neighbouring tribes and civil war with one's own rival kins. The clash of these expanding slave States with the *Gana-Samghas* of the original inhabitants, the civil war of the slave-owning houses for appropriation of the vast wealth produced by their own Vaisyas and Sudras, finally culminated in the Mahabharata war. Democracy of the *Gana* members was long ago dead among the Kauravas of Hastinapura. The ancient Kurus of the *Purushasukta*, the founders of patriarchal slavery, had now blossomed into rulers of a big territorial slave State. The democracy of *Gana* members narrowed into the aristocracy of the elders, of the rich *Kulas* (houses), and even they were now on the point of annihilation at the hands of absolute monarchy. That is why Krishna complains in the meeting of the Kaurava elders that that has been the bane of the Kauravas—their elders have proved incapable of using force against the younger princes who were running post-haste to overthrow all remnants of ancient democracy. This incapacity arose from the fact that these elders who were supposed to guard the democracy of the *Gana-Samghas* had themselves become its hangmen. They themselves were after wealth, slaves and land. War had become a profession with them. The concentration of wealth was proceeding at such a rapid rate that Drona, who was one of the most skilful technicians and teachers of war weapons, was in the grip of poverty and had to feed his son, Ashvatthama, when he asked for milk, with water mixed with white flour, and thus pacify the crying child. No wonder he was willing to sell his services to any slave-owner who paid. The aristocratic slave-owners were living in fear of the slaves and the unconquered tribes from whom the slaves were drawn, and the slightest attempt by any



one of them to bear arms or claim the rights of a human being was ferociously punished. Had Ekalavya, the Nishada boy, not been a victim of his own loyalty to the ideology of his masters, he would not have lost his fingers to Drona and would have been a great Sudra rival to Arjuna. Greed for wealth had gripped these slave-owners and for wealth they were prepared to launch the biggest massacre in ancient Indian history—the Mahabharata war.

The logic of slavery, money and class rule had rebounded on the slave-owners. The technique and heroism that they had developed as *Gana-Samghas* to conquer the original inhabitants, the Rakshasas, Nagas, Nishadas, Dravidas, &c., had almost come to a dead end, after the occupation of the Gangetic and Indus Valleys. Formerly conquest was easy with the horse and the iron-tipped arrow which the invading Aryans had and which the local population had not. The expanding *Ganas* spread and carved out domains for themselves. But as private property, slavery, trade and concentration of wealth grew, the *Gana* democracy split into hostile classes and civil war gripped them. As expansion for land and slaves became more and more difficult, the aristocratic houses tried to carve each other out. Concentration of property ran counter to the demands of kins and near kins to share growing property according to the laws of old *Gana* democracy. War with alien tribes for slaves and loot rebounded and produced war with one's own kins. And the slave-owning class itself fought its own slave-owning brothers for a share of loot. Slavery of the conquered enslaved the conquerors in their greed. It killed their own former *Gana* democracy. Otherwise, whoever had heard of brothers and their wives being sold into slavery over a game of dice ! Which mother in the old days of the *Yajna* commune would have cast away a beautiful son like Karna, as Kunti did, because he was born to her as a virgin ? And yet the illegitimate child, Karna brought up with the humble fishermen of Angas, was more generous and brave than his 'legitimate' brothers. And Arjuna, the half-legitimate son of Pandu, could win even in ordinary sports only by vaunting forth his pride of a slave-owner *Rajan* descent, while his competitor, Karna, could not tell his father's name ! The humanity of the primitive *Gana* commune had succumbed to the malignity and pride of wealth of the slave-owners. The Mahabharata war was the result.



The Bharata war, to begin with, started as a war between the princes of the same ruling family of the kingdom of Hastinapura. It began as a civil war among kins. That was totally against the *Yajna-Gana* principles, where kins could not kill kins.

In the alliances that each side formed, there were several *Gana-Samghas* who also split among themselves and went to war against each other, by joining either the Kauravas or Pandavas—viz., the Satvatas. It was a general crack-up of all *Gana-Samgha* democracies.

The kin princes of several other States also split among themselves and went to war—viz., the Magadhas. The civil war had entered every ruling house of the nobility.

Several tribes of the original inhabitants, whose chiefs had formed ties with these ruling houses, either after defeat or by mere alliance, also joined the war—viz., Rakshasas. Some tribes, however, hailed the civil war as an opportunity for them to get rid of these big expanding States, which were conquering and enslaving them—viz., the Nagas, Dravidas, &c. They hoped to return to their good old days on the ruins of these kingdoms—a vain hope.

The prominent chiefs of the confederacy of the Yadava *Samghas*, though related to the Kurus, refused to join in the war and under the leadership of Krishna tried to act as mediators. But once the war began, their neutrality, except for a few, became merely formal, as that of Krishna, who personally sided with the Pandavas while his armies joined with the Kauravas. It means the Andhaka-Vrishnis also split and took opposite sides.

Thus the Mahabharata war involved almost the whole of North India in a terrible carnage. The whole old world of the *Gana-Samghas*, military democracies, aristocratic *Kula-Samghas*, slave States and all were thrown in one boiling cauldron of the war. It was the end of the old world of *Ganas* and their values, their morality and ethics, their economy and social relations. A new world wanted to stabilise itself, the world of greed, wealth and concentrated power of the slave-owners over the exploited Sudras and Vaisyas.

This terrific crisis in social relations, and ideological values reflecting them, is in a way hinted at in the episode of the



*Bhagawadgeeta*. Leaving aside for the mement the various schools of philosophy which that book discusses, its origin suggests that it gave the final death-blow to the collective *Gana* relations and their ideology and enthroned, almost in a cynical fashion, the supremacy of the morality of private property and class relations. The new relations had become a fact, the word of *Geeta* gave them a theory and tried to silence critics, who may speak from the standpoint of the old *Gana* democracy. In the name of the new *Avatara* of Divinity and *Kali* age, the *Geeta* declared that the age of kinship and collective *Gana* democracy was over, the age of class antagonisms and exploitation had come; the ethics and morality of the former were dead, the ethics and morality of the latter were supreme.

Certainly the eighteen chapters of the *Geeta* were not produced between Krishna and Arjuna right in the middle of the field of battle, as the traditional account tells us. Even with due respect to the great personalities involved, Krishna was too much of a realist to put himself in such a funny position. The theoretician of the Mahabharata war compiled that book in some peaceful corner. But the compilation is not merely an afterthought, nor is the war situation taken merely as an excuse to retail out all the philosophical schools of the writer's period. If that were the only motive, it could as well have come in the *Shanti Parva*, where all sorts of questions and controversies have been raised and answered. The main question which the writer wants to answer in the *Geeta* was a general question raised by all thinking people of the Bharata war. The question is neither of *Sannyasa* nor of *Karmayoga*. The *geeta*, no doubt, discusses the main question of philosophy—the relation of being to consciousness. It even wants to give an opinion on the relation of diet to thinking and behaviour. But, with all that, it is clear to every student of history that Arjuna's malady was not dietetic nor his problem one of choosing some school of philosophy. He had posed a simple question that was perhaps uppermost in the minds of all the common men of that period who had still preserved the moral and ethical loyalties of *Gana* relations. His claim for a share in the kingdom, even five villages, if not more, had brought him to a pass, where he had to battle and kill his *Gurus*, grandfathers, brothers, uncles, in short, every known kin, to kill whom, according to the ideology of the old period, for what-



ever reason, was sin, absolutely taboo.\* Old *Gana* democracies trained their people to look upon such killing with the greatest horror. How was all this permissible and not sinful? If the old morality held, then all the leaders on either side were wrong, taking all the *Kulas* to ruin and hell. Give up the claims for property and kingdom and thus avoid the kin-massacre and the sin of it and retire (*Sanyasa*)—this was the the only logical result of the *Gana-Samgha*, *Kula-Samgha* laws. But if the war had to be fought, what was the new ethical law, new social value, that sanctioned it and made it sinless to kill the kins? Arjuna raised the question, the commonalty of the *Ganas* felt that way and demanded an answer. The theoretician of the *Geeta* gave the answer. The answer shows the hopeless contradictions in which society had involved itself, and to which the theoretician of class society could find no profounder answer than to say: 'It is fate, it is your class duty, trust and obey.' And as if to make up for the deficiency of reason and to buttress the new class law with fright and terror, Krishna is supposed to have revealed his *Virata* form in which the destiny of all is visualised in advance. Arjuna is silenced and says he is satisfied. Common humanity is talked out, dumbfounded, terrorised and drugged, and goes into an unholy massacre made holy by new relations, philosophy and law. Looking at the whole thing rationally and historically and without religious prejudices, the sum total of the *Geeta* episode boils down to that.

How does the *Geeta* lay down the moral theory of the new territorial class State as against the moral law of the *Gana*-kin commune?

In the old commune of collective labour and consumption, when variety of products and work grew, division of labour—*Varnas*—came into existence. Each *Varna* had its work allotted, but all product was social and so also consumption. The func-

\* आचार्याः पितरः पुत्रास्तथैव च पितामहाः ।

मातुलाः श्वशुराः पौत्राः श्यालाः सम्बन्धिनस्तथा ॥ ३४

एतान्न हन्तुमिच्छामि धनतोऽपि मधुसूदन ।

अपि त्रैलोक्यराज्यस्य हेतोः किं नु महीकृते । ३५

अहो बत महत्पापं कर्तुं व्यवसिता वयम् ।

यद्राज्यसुखलोभेन हन्तुं स्वजनमुद्यताः ॥ गीता. अ. १-४५



tioning in a given *Varna* of a commune member did not create for him any special rewards, returns or property rights. *Varna* only specialised labour and improved the product and work of social organisation. But when exchange, trade, private property and money arose, each private family created its private property and rights according to the *Varna* in which it was situated. Naturally the *Varnas* connected with war, exchange and direction of production, became the economically dominant *Varnas*. Those who were poor in the dominant *Varnas* of the Brahma-Kshatra were thrown out into the toiling *Varnas*, into *Vishalatva*, as they called it. The *Varnas* became classes. *Varna* affinity was replaced by class affinity, loyalty, duty and rewards. The upper two *Varnas* became the exploiting class and the other two, exploited. Except the Sudra slave, one could change from one *Varna* into another, that is, from one class into another, according to property and status. Class rights, *Varna* rights, became superior to and suppressed *Gana* commune rights.

It was the *Varna* duty of the Kshatriyas to wage war and annihilate the enemy. But the enemy in *Gana* commune days was *always an alien*. In the absence of class antagonisms inside the commune there was no question of the Kshatriya warring with his *Gana* members, who were all kins, blood relations to each other. When private property and slaves entered the commune, the Kshatriya and Brahmin became the exploiters and organs of force over the slaves and the poor inside the broken commune. Now it was their *Varna* duty to wage war with everyone, alien and kin, *both*, for preservation and perpetuation of the new economy and class relations based on exploitation. To fight and kill in order to keep, increase or recover wealth, cattle, villages, land, slaves, kingships, all now the property of the person or family concerned, became the new duty and right of the Brahmin and Kshatriya families, no matter who was the enemy or the opponent concerned. He may be a kin, blood relation, *Guru* or grandfather, *Gana* member or alien. That is the first lesson which the *Geeta* gives to Arjuna as a Kshatriya. It is based on the new relations of *Varna*-class antagonisms and not on the old *Dharma* or the self-acting armed organisation of the people of primitive communism. If you fight and win, you earn the kingdom of the land and pleasure, if you are killed in the battle, you still win Heaven—that is the only norm of life



and behaviour for the new rich ruling classes. In the youthful days of the State and private property, the Kshatriya had at least to risk his neck, while exploiting the poor Vaisya and Sudra and fighting the tribes to enslave them. In the later days, even that risk was transferred to the hired standing armies!

Having dissolved the duties and *Dharma* of the collective and enthroned the violence of one class over another, the *Geeta* is unable to guarantee a well-coordinated class society, in which both the exploiters and exploited, even within the framework of exploitation, can be sure of life and living, free from recurring crises. In the old commune, even within the framework of its poverty of productive forces, each one was sure of his share of the collective product; he produced it for use and the commune gave it to him for use. The product did not leave the hands of the producer, to be metamorphosed into money, into something totally different from what it was for use, and find itself circling round the whole world in trade, as it did now, on the magic carpet of gold—*Hiranya*. Now that wonderful abstraction, gold-money, was valid everywhere, in all sizes and forms, among all classes and *Varnas* and for all things on earth. What mysterious abstract force did this *Hiranya* contain to make it so all-pervading and yet so illusive? What magical abstraction was it that gave it the power to move all things and become everything at the same time? Why was it that he who created a useful thing made for joy, could not enjoy it except through the intervention of money—*Hiranya* the Mysterious? Why was it that when he changed it into money, that money itself would not buy the same thing today as it did yesterday? The slave laboured and the master got the pleasure, someone traded and lost and someone gained. Had man's living life a law by which, given his honest labour, he could get his honest living? Oh, God! Have you also come out of the womb of the golden *Hiranya* and become *Hiranya-garbha*?<sup>1</sup>

The primitive commune had no such questions, it had no need for the philosophy of harmonising antagonistic human relations. The *Vedic* literature of the ancient commune prayed,

<sup>1</sup> The later chapters of the *Rigveda* call the Creator by the name of *Vishwa-Karma* and *Hiranya-garbha* and the monistic idealism of Vedanta philosophy, correlating the *Atman* and *Brahman*, is partly derived from these ideas. (See *Rigveda*, X, 121).



shouted, did dance and music, and scratched its head to find out how the cow could be persuaded to give more milk. The *Vedic* 'philosopher' marvelled that the green grass that went in the stomach of the black cow came out as warm white milk. He marvelled and was even frightened that the seed dropped in the earth sprouted and came back again manifold. He wanted to know why? He wanted to know, how all this Nature worked, who moved it? He felled a tree, cut a chip, made an arrow, thought and planned, reasoned cause and effect, pursued and killed a deer and ate it. He was happy. How did the Nature-given tree-twigg become an arrow and the deer his food? Because he planned it and he laboured. But how the tree and deer came there, why some day you find the deer and some day you cannot? His main problem was one of understanding Nature and getting hold of it to live and grow and be happy. He saw people die and he saw them in dreams. He saw himself flying, wandering in strange places in dreams, while yet in his place round the *Yajna* fire, in the *Yajna* home. Had he not something in him which lived beyond him, which planned and thought? He imagined spirits and souls, he saw himself. *i.e.*, life like him, in everything. He was generalising, learning, 'philosophising' to fathom the processes of the world. He was probing logic, reason, thinking, sensation, the relation of consciousness to being. It was at that stage that the only philosophical *Sukta*, the *Nasadiya Sukta* in the *Rigveda*, was born. But the *Vedas* and their *Yajna* commune never went beyond that. It was thus that the roads to early *Upanishadic* philosophy were being laid.

But man at that stage was not involved in battling with his own creation, his own social forces. There was no antagonism there wanting to be explained. His food fed him, and his hunger satisfied he was happy. His cloth clothed him and he felt warm and he was happy.

Now came a society of antagonism and exploitation, his food was taken away to feed somebody else, who did no labour for it. His cloth was taken away to robe the master, while he shivered. If he questioned, he was hit. If he refused to create, the violence of all 'society' descended on him to force him to create. He was told it was his duty to create. If he asked for a share enough to let him live, he was accused of greed and



taught to be modest. Thus came that profound principle of the *Geeta* and *Upanishadic* philosophy:

You have only to do and go on doing what has been ordained for you by your station in life. You have no control or right over results of what you do. Do not do things with an eye on getting the fruits of your doings; and never stop working.\*

This is the famous lesson of the *Geeta* that has been preached to the protesting Arjuna and common man for centuries since the Mahabharata war. It is the essence of the philosophy of class society, involved in contradictions, anarchy, crises and chance, which cannot guarantee results according to plan in social life. Private property and anarchy of production, divorce of the producer from control over the product, which was never possible in the primitive commune and will not be possible under the Socialism of the future, called forth the above slogans of the religion of the class State, to hold the producer to his slavery and poverty and justify the ruling class in its job of suppression and exploitation.

Even the most specious argument of duty and *Lokasamgraha* (good of the community) proved a little weak to persuade the vacillating Arjuna to kill. Emotions and feelings well up in him. Once dead, all is at an end, either for him or for them. And when such an argument comes, in answer the *Geeta* reduces all human beings to an abstraction called the *Atman* (soul) which, though encased in the body, is apart from it; it neither feels nor thinks, neither lives nor dies. Sensation, feeling, etc., are transitory attributes of the body and the very capacity for them can be overcome, and when overcome, man attains a state (that of the *Sthitaprajna*) where his actions cease to have any attachment for him or any binding results on him. Even if he kills then, he does no sin, and since the *Atman* in the killed and killer is neutral and immortal, nothing, so to say, really has happened. Such a man feels no pleasure or pain, heat or cold. He has attained liberation from his body even when living, and after death is not born again to reap interest on his investments

\* कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ गीता अ. २-४७

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वम् । गीता अ. ३-८



in sin or virtue. The whole carnage of the Bharata war was thus dissolved into fiction or mirage.

The principle again was wielded by the ruling class against the toiling masses in the centuries to come in order to disarm the masses of their feelings of protest, their unhappiness and anger. It produced that wonderful legend of Janaka and others like him, where the rich king ate good food but felt no pleasure in his tongue, wore good cloth but was not attached to any feeling about it. So even the toiling slave must feel happy in starvation, control his emotions and reduce his body to a sensationless working machine to discharge the ordained duty. When everyone has attained that stage, poverty and misery vanish, as they lose their meaning for man. The question of exploitation, slavery, share of product, State and violence then need no longer be raised on a social level, when each individual can get happiness by these simple acrobatics of thought.

The theoretician of the post-Bharata class society was not quite certain of his success in such an argument convincing and leading man's reason to a conduct and to social relations running counter to all human life and feeling. So, like all leaderships of the ruling classes, desiring to uproot the rational personality of the toiling masses and converting it into blind loyalty to the ruling class, he comes to the final advice—'leave every law and injunction to its fate and follow me in devotion.'\* As to the question of eliminating chaos and crises in the world, the writer holds no hope before his readers and leaves us with the assurance that God will appear from time to time to resolve the crises, thus taking the subject out of the purview of frail humanity. A planless world cannot be planned by social man!

It is not our intention here to go into all the philosophical systems of the *Geeta* or the *Upanishads*. What we wanted to point out is that the idealist schools of philosophy we find in *Vedanta* are products of a period when the Aryan society broke into class contradictions, antagonisms and war. At the same time, we must bear one thing in mind: that while looking into these systems, one has to separate the honest attempts of thinkers to probe into phenomena and their ideas about it from the use to which such ideas, which conform to and are limited by the



social relations of the time, are put by the ruling classes for their class interests. Secondly, one must remember that since all social law and thinking was at that time coded into religious systems, the attempts of the revolutionary classes and exploited sections to liberate themselves also found expression in establishing different sects, philosophical systems and religions. One must learn to distinguish the roles of each sect or system in its given epoch in the context of the class struggles of the period. In this also, the theoretician of the Bharata war and its aftermath plays a significant social role. While conforming to the fundamental basis of the idealist philosophy of class society, he nevertheless attempts a certain compromise to mitigate the hardships of slavery without in any way changing the social relations of the exploiter and the exploited. In that the Bhakti school of the *Geeta* advances a step from the most reactionary ritualists of the slave owners of the Bharata war period. What was it due to? It was due to the aftermath of the Bharata war. Let us, therefore, look into the aftermath.



## CHAPTER XV

### SLAVERY WEAKENS—NEW FORCES, NEW STAGE

THE worst fears expressed by all thinking men of the period and instinctively felt by the common man about the results of war came true. Contrary to the expectations of either side, the war resulted in such a massacre of both the victors and the vanquished, that the victorious Pandavas were completely bankrupt at the end of the struggle and almost all the leading men, kings and princes, fine warriors and generals fell on the battle-field. All the States which participated in the struggle as also the allied *Gana-Samghas* were thoroughly weakened and shattered by the fierceness of the massacre. The slave-owners' States and the ruling leaders of the *Gana-Samghas* having been weakened, the Naga, Nishada and other tribes got a breathing space, and in order to win back their old positions began to attack the once powerful, much-feared and much-hated Aryan *Kulas* and their armies.

The general crisis in the slave-owning States and *Samghas* of the period is evidenced in the fact that this onslaught of the Naga tribes along with others began as a general onslaught on the States of the Gangetic Valley, advancing from the east, west and south. The bankruptcy of the slave-owners is visible in the fact that Yudhisthira had no money left even to celebrate the victory by performing the *Ashwa Medha*, unless some hidden treasures came to his aid.\* The celebration of his so-called good deeds excited no enthusiasm in the common afflicted mass of the people, who ridiculed the conquerors in their own way. A mouse with half his body turned into gold, entered the place

\* दानमल्पं न शक्नोमि दातुं वित्तम् च नास्ति मे ॥ १२

स्वयं दिनाश्य पृथिवीं यज्ञार्थं द्विज-सत्तम ।

करमाहारयिष्यामि संघ शोकपरायणः ॥ १३ महाभा. आश्वमेधिक ३



of the Pandavas' celebration. Noticing his peculiar body someone asked what he wanted and why only half his body was golden. The mouse sniffed around and failing to turn his other half into gold turned back and replied that he had become half gold when that part of his body had touched the ground where a poor man had given a few crumbs in charity. But here in spite of all this overflowing riches and food given to the Brahmins, the place of the slave-owners' celebration had not the power to turn into gold his other half. That was a popular commentary on the virtues of the victorious! Whole sections of the ruling-class *Varnas* were being hurled into poverty and were willing to sell their services to anybody. In places where there was famine and drought, the proud ruling-class Brahmins turned to the hated Chandalas in their forest retreat to ask for food, and it had become the privilege of the conquered, enslaved Chandala to preach morality to the holy Vishwamitra of the conquering Aryans not to resort to eating the carcass of a dog to preserve his life. The terror of the big States having weakened and the sheer greed for self and power of the ruling classes having been exposed during the war, their talk of morality and virtue having been found out as mere screen for grabbing land, slaves and luxuries of life from the toil of others, straightforward materialism faced them with its challenge. But the Pandavas, true to their class nature, beheaded the materialists,<sup>1</sup> lest they might really head the disgusted people. But all this could not easily arrest the march of the rising tribes, and the internal civil war in the surviving *Gana-Samghas* grew even more fierce.

The *Mausala Parva* of the *Mahabharata* and the complaint of Krishna about his precarious position in his own *Gana-Samgha* of the Yadavas give us the main outlines of the general collapse and ruin.

The Andhaka-Vrishni *Samgha* of the Yadavas had generally kept aloof from the war, safely ensconced in Dwaravati of the Saurashtra region where they had migrated in the face of the attacks of Shishupala and his allies. But that does not mean that the Yadava *Gana* democracy had saved itself from degenerating into a vicious aristocracy. Their *Samgha* was already in the grip of such fierce rivalry of the rich leading families that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Mahabharata*. *Shanti*. 37.



Krishna, though their elected president, complains against the other leaders that he was finding it difficult to keep the Yadavas on his side. The advice which Narada gives him to preserve his leadership is remarkable. He accuses Krishna of not being sufficiently humble and polite and sparing with his purse in giving ample feasts and distributing presents. The inclusion of this item in the methods of winning leadership in a *Gana* shows us how it was fast collapsing under the weight of class cleavage. The *Mausala Parva* tells us that the Yadavas went *en masse* for their usual gay life and feasts, drank, argued and quarrelled over the Mahabharata war and the treacherous deeds of some of the participants and came to blows. The already pent-up rivalries of the aristocrats flared up in a general massacre; when the skirmishes were on, the Nagas from the east attacked the city of the *Gana-Samgha*. In the attack Krishna himself was killed and also the leading Yadavas. This civil war too was so furious that later people used the term '*Yadavi*' for civil war!

The Pandavas ran to the help of the Andhaka-Vrishnis but they failed to save them from the Nagas and others. The terror of the Gangetic States, of the powers of the Kurus and Purus was gone. Arjuna complained that in these battles against the Nagas and others when he reached for his famous weapons, "they would not come to him." Gone was their efficacy. A few families were extricated from the carnage and reached Hastinapura.

But Hastinapura ceased to be the centre of growing power. The Pandavas survived the war for a time and then went to Heaven, as the *Mahabharata* wants us to believe, accompanied by a dog. Parikshit, their grandson, was killed by the Nagas. And it is revealing to find that the Brahmin leader, Kashyapa, who had advance knowledge of the plans of the attack on Parikshit, was bought off with gold by Takshaka, the Naga leader. Some sort of respite seems to have been won by his son Janamejaya, whose offensive against the Nagas forced them to a compromise for a time. That closes for us the Mahabharata period. A kind of blank, dark period in history follows it, until again the big States of the Gangetic Valley arise on new ground. The gravitating centre of these States is no longer Hastinapura. It is Pataliputra of Magadha.

But slavery by then is on the decline, the serf of the countryside and the artisan of the town, with the merchant at his heel,



begin to dominate the scene, with the absolute monarch crowning them all. The half-emancipated, half runaway slaves of the slave-owning houses now usher in their philosophy aided by landlord-cum-merchant youngmen, the devotees and disciples of the forerunners of Buddhism. But we do not wish to treat that subject here. We only wish to point out that the results of the Mahabharata war so weakened the forces of slavery that it could not continue on its career in the old way. No doubt slavery continued and the slave-owners' States reorganised and grew up again. But their own mutual massacre, the uprisings and resistance of the Nishadas, Nagas, &c., could not allow the growth to be so easy and cheap as in the early days. Moreover, the Nagas, had such a vast hinterland to retreat and find their living that the harshest forms of slavery could not hold long. Replenishing the worn-out or lost slave was becoming difficult, conquests were spreading out beyond the means of the slave-owners' resources and were impoverishing the people. The vastness and fertility of the valleys all around gave the defeated and the runaways enough support to continue their struggles. Lastly, the growing production, exchange and trade had brought on the scene the new class—the merchants—who had become an independent power in economy and who gained by the runaway slave becoming their artisan in the shelter of the town-capital, under the wings of the strong prince, whose strength lay in playing between the town and the countryside, between the merchant and the land- and slave-owner.

Agriculture, as we said before had grown on a vast scale. The question of the private ownership of land began to assume a serious aspect. And under the new conditions, stated above, it was becoming difficult to carry it on on the basis of slavery; and the same was the case with handicraft industrial production. The conditions for mitigating slavery and making room for serfdom were ripening. Not a small part in the hastening of this process was played by the Mahabharata war.

It is these conditions that called forth a new attitude to slavery among the law-givers of the exploiting class and their philosophers. It is this which the theoretician of the *Geeta* in the post-Bharata period proclaims in that famous line where Krishna says: 'Even though woman, Vaisya and the Sudra



slave are born for slavery they can obtain salvation in heaven, if they follow me.' Thus at the time of the Bharata war, the slave-owners' State had reduced into slavery even the free Aryan Vaisya, the great mass of toilers who were the original proud Visha of early *Gana* communes, and had put them and all womanhood by the side of the Sudra slave. They had no salvation here on earth nor in heaven. In the days of early patriarchal slavery the slave-owning Brahmin and Kshatriya could marry the slave woman or keep her, and the children could share equally in the property. But the slave as such could not think of liberation nor be allowed to accumulate his own property. Then, as property differentiation became more acute in the Aryan *Ganas* themselves and the ruined Vaisya was thrown into the ranks of the slaves, he threatened revolt and civil war. The victorious dictatorship of the slave-owners crushed the opposition of the ruined Vaisya and their allies from the Nishadhas-Nagas, and instituted a reign of complete terror. It was in that period that the Aryan Vaisya was degraded to the level of the Sudra. The woman was there before. The relations with the slave woman then ceased to have that patriarchal character and the offsprings lost their old status. Whereas formerly under patriarchy they were taken in the *Varnas* of the free patriarch father, they were now degraded to the *Varna* of the slave-mother—i.e., their road to partial freedom was closed.

The unconquered or semi-conquered population was too numerous to give peace to the Aryan slave-owning houses. The Aryan Vaisyas themselves had collapsed from freedom to slavery as the class cleavage grew. The productive forces were growing at a rapid rate and demanded new production relations. Exchange, trade, handicrafts, the merchants and their new social forces demanded first a mitigation of slavery. It was announced in the name of Krishna of the *Geeta*. His was the fittest name for the job, because, as the most popular representative of the biggest *Gana-Samgha* that survived the war, he could be made the bearer of the slogan of 'liberation in heaven,' and strike a compromise, in which the slave and woman could work on this earth without disturbing the peace of the exploiting class, and reap their wages and liberation in heaven where they were promised equality with their masters! It sounds rather queer in these days—but not so queer! It was a compromise of the



slave-owners with new forces, who were heading towards serfdom and the feudal order.

Slavery is the first form of exploitation, the form peculiar to the ancient world; it is succeeded by serfdom in the Middle Ages, and wage-labour in the more recent period. These are the three great forms of servitude, characteristic of the three great epochs of civilisation; open, and in the recent times disguised, slavery always accompanies them.

We do not go into the second stage of social development in this treatise. The main purpose of this volume is to show how the primitive commune arose, grew and then collapsed, and how slavery came in with its State based on *Danda*, the violent dictatorship of the victorious owners of private property and slaves. The savage who did not know how to produce fire had now grown to vast dimensions, occupied continents, built towns and kingdoms, had developed vast productive forces to wield Nature to his needs, had risen from savagery to barbarism and from barbarism to civilisation. He had developed weapons of war and peace, art and literature, probed Nature to find her laws and secrets; from conceptions of millions of spirits, goblins and gods he had learnt to raise the problem of monism, of the particular to the general, of the individual to the universal, of objective world to subjective thinking.

But the steps of all these advances were dogged by steps of backward retreat also. The pristine commune of the barbarian, without class conflict, without slavery, greed, property and mutual violence between kin and kin, had fallen a prey to slavery, class war, greed and violence of brother against brother.

Since the exploitation of one class by another is the basis of civilization, its whole development moves in a continuous contradiction. Every advance in production is at the same time a retrogression in the condition of the oppressed class, that is, of the great majority. What is a boon for the one is necessarily a bane for the other; each new emancipation of one class always means a new oppression of another class. . . . And while among barbarians, as we have seen, hardly any distinction could be made between rights and duties, civilization makes the difference and antithesis between these two plain even to the dumbest mind by assigning to one class pretty nearly all the rights, and to the other class pretty nearly all the duties.



But this is not as it ought to be. What is good for the ruling class should be good for the whole of the society with which the ruling class identifies itself. Therefore, the more civilization advances, the more it is compelled to cover the ills it necessarily creates with the cloak of love, to embellish them, or to deny their existence; in short, to introduce conventional hypocrisy—unknown both in previous forms of society and even in the earliest stages of civilization—that culminates in the declaration: The exploiting class exploits the oppressed class solely and exclusively in the interest of the exploited class itself; and if the latter fails to appreciate this, and even becomes rebellious, it thereby shows the basest ingratitude to its benefactors, the exploiters.<sup>2</sup>

But the cleavage of society into classes has not existed from eternity, nor the State.

There have been societies that did without it, that had no conception of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this cleavage. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not only will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as inevitably as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. The society that will organize production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into the Museum of Antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.<sup>3</sup>

But this museum of humanity's past can only be built, when a majority of the countries of the world have built classless society and communism. The world has already entered that period.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *The Origin of the Family, etc.*, pp. 289-91.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 283-84.



## *Appendix I*

**MATRIARCHAL gens in the Mahabharata from whom proceeds world-population.**

### *From Matriarch*

1. Aditi
2. Diti
3. Danu
4. Kala
5. Vinata
6. Kadru
7. Muni
8. Pradha
9. Kapila
10. Krittika
11. Sinhika
12. Puloma
13. Vasu
14. Vishwa
15. Marutmati
16. Bhanu
17. Muhurta
18. Sadhya

### *The Ganas of*

- Adityas
- Daityas
- Danavas
- Kalakeyas
- Vainateyas
- Kadraveyas
- Mouneyas
- Pradheyas
- Kapilas
- Kartikeyas
- Sainhikeyas
- Paulomas
- Vasavas
- Vishwas
- Marutmantas
- Bhanavas
- Muhurtas
- Sadhyas

**And these Ganas later are shown as the progenitors of famous men and Gana-feuds in the Mahabharata.**



## Appendix II

### 1. (p. xi.) : Classification of Slaves.

Narada mentions fifteen kinds as follows :

गृहजातस्तथा क्रीतो लब्धो दायदुपागतः ।

अनाकालभृतो लोके आहितः स्वामिना च यः ॥ २४

नोक्षितो महतश्चाणांप्राप्तो युद्धात्पणार्जितः ।

नवाहमित्युपगतः प्रवृज्यावसितः कृतः ॥ २५

भक्तदासश्च विशेषस्तथैव वडवाहतः ।

विक्रेता चात्मतः शास्त्रैः दासाः पञ्चदश स्मृताः ॥ २६ *Narad. v.*

*Manusmriti* mentions seven kinds.

As Narada is fairly exhaustive we need not enumerate Manu's. (*Manusmriti*. VIII., 415).

### 2. (p. xi) : For liberation *Vidhi* see *Narada Sutras*.

The master takes away an earthen jar of water from the slave's shoulder and smashes it. Then, he sprinkles the slave's head with water containing grain and flowers, and declares him a free man three times.

### 3. (p. xiii) : Hiring out and Torture of Slaves.

See *Jatakas*—Vol. I, 402, wherein is described the fate of a female slave, who is sent by her master to work for him. When she fails to bring money she is given a flogging.

The slave *Katahaka*, who has learned to read and write along with the son of the family and who is otherwise clever and knows the art of speaking, discharges the duties of a store-keeper, but is afraid lest he should one day lose this office due to some fault and may then be thrashed, branded and locked up.

[ तालेत्वा बंधित्वा लल्लुक्खणेन अंकेत्वा दासपरिभोगेणपि परिभुंजिस्सन्ति ]



4. (p. xix) : Mahabhumi or State territory.

This is described as 'gopatharajamarga—jalasayadyanvita', (i.e., which contains cattle-tracks, royal roads, tanks and so forth).

5. (p. xxii) : Re : workers employed by the State.

788-89. Time is divided according to three systems—Solar movement, lunar movement and according to Savana.

789-90. In making payments of wages one should always take the solar time, in augmenting interest one should take the lunar time, and the savana system should be followed in (giving) daily wages.

791-92. Remuneration can be paid according to time, work or according to both. It is to be paid therefore as arranged, i.e., according to contract.

793-94. 'This weight is to be carried by you thither and I shall give you so much for your work'—Remuneration calculated according to this system is according to work.

795-96. 'Every year, month or day I shall pay you so much'—Remuneration calculated according to this idea is according to time.

797-98. 'So much work has been done by you in so much time; I shall therefore pay you so much'—Remuneration thus calculated is according to both time and work.

799-802. One should neither stop nor postpone payment of salary. Moderate remuneration is said to be that which supplies the indispensable food and clothing. Good wage is that by which food and clothing are adequately supplied. Low wage is that by which only one can be maintained.

803-4. According to the qualifications of the workers there should be the rates of wages fixed by the king carefully for his own welfare.

805-6. Wage is to be fixed that worker may maintain those who are his compulsory charges.

807-8. Those servants who get low wages are enemies by nature. They are auxiliaries to others and seekers of opportunities and plunderers of treasure and people.

809. Wages of Sudras are to be just enough for food and raiment.



- 813-14. Servants are of three kinds—inactive, ordinary and quick. Their wages therefore have to be low, ordinary and high respectively.
- 815-16. For the discharge of their domestic duties servants should be granted leave for one *yama* during day time and three *yamas* by night, and the servant who has been appointed for a day should be allowed half *yama*.
- 817-18. The king should make them work except on occasions of festivities, but in festivities also if the work be indispensable, excepting in any case the days of *Shradaha*.
- 819-21. He should pay a quarter less than the usual remuneration to the diseased servant, pay three months' wages to the servant who has been long ill; but not more to anybody.
- 822-24. Even a slight portion should not be deducted from the full remuneration of a servant who has been ill for half a fortnight and a substitute should be taken of one who has lived for even one year, and if the diseased be highly qualified he should have half the wages.
825. The king should give the servant fifteen days a year respite from work.
- 826-27. The king should grant half the wages without work to the man who has passed forty years in his service.
- 828-29. For life, and to the son if minor and incapable, half the wages, or to the wife and well-behaved daughters.
- 830-31. He should give the servant one-eighth of the salary by way of reward every year, and if the work has been done with exceptional ability one-eighth of the services rendered.
- 832-33. He should give the same salary to the son of the man who died for his work so long as he is a minor, otherwise should pay the remuneration according to the offsprings' qualifications.
- 834-35. He should keep with him (as deposit) one-sixth or one-fourth of the servant's wages, should pay half of that amount or the whole in two or three years. (Prof. Sarkar thinks that herein the idea of a Provident Fund is suggested.)
- 836-37. The master by harsh words, low wages, severe punishments and insult brings out in the servant the attributes of the enemy.



## APPENDIX

- 838-39. Those who are satisfied with wages and honoured by distinctions and pacified by soft words never desert their master.
- 840-41. The worst servants desire wealth, the medium want both wealth and fame, the best want fame. Reputation is the wealth of the great.
- (*Sukraniti*—Panini Office; Edition, 1914. Translation by Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar ; Vol. XIII, in Sacred Books of the Hindus Series.)

## 6. (p. xxiii) : Vararuchi.

After Panini, who was the greatest grammarian of Sanskrit language, ancient India records Vararuchi as one of the great grammarians of the Prakrit languages. He wrote the 'Prakrita-Prakasha' a grammar of the four main Prakrit languages—Maharashtri, Magadhi, Paishachi and Shauraseni.

Vararuchi seems to have flourished before Asoka.

## 7. (p. xxiii) : Gunadhya.

The story of Gunadhya is one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of India and its folk literature in Prakrit languages as typified in the famous collection of 'Brihatkatha'.

The study of Vararuchi and Gunadhya, who was a Satavahana king, is absolutely necessary for the understanding of our nationalities and the growth of Prakrit languages and literature.



## Appendix III

### STANDING ARMIES AND ECONOMY

INDIA from 6th to 2nd centuries B.C., that is, from the rise of Buddha to the fall of Asoka, had built up some very big empires. It is important to know what were the sources of revenue of these empires and how they utilised them. The *Kautaliya Arthasastra* and other works can give us material to deal with this subject.

In these works we find the State or the Emperor carrying on agriculture by means of slaves, hired servants and free tenants. He also maintains workshops or manufactories, not only for the manufacture of armaments and supplies for the army but also for trade. There are, of course, other sources of revenue also.

The question that is to be raised for study is how far economic activity under these empires developed *commodity production* with its attendant role of money and merchant capital.

Another interesting question for study in the same field is the role of the big standing armies maintained by these empires and their effect on the economy and the people.

We find the armies of four empires mentioned as follows :

	<i>Foot soldiers</i>	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Elephants</i>
Magadha	60,000	30,000	900
Kalinga	50,000	10,000	700
Talukta	50,000	4,000	700
Andhra	1,00,000	2,000	1,000

According to Alexander's informants the Nandas before Chandragupta had the following :

<i>Foot soldiers</i>	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Elephants</i>	<i>Chariots</i>
2,00,000	20,000	4,000	2,000

These figures and the relative composition of the various arms raise very important points for study.

Looking to the level of productive forces of that period one has to find out the volume of productive forces that would



have to be set aside for maintaining such an army. If a part of this were to be realised as rent in kind from the villages, how much would have been the burden of rent and taxes on the people? If a part of this were to be bought on the market and if even a part of the payment of the personnel would have to be made in money (some payment was in money and some in rations), what an amount of money must have been set in circulation? In the natural economy of that period, what effects such commodity movement must have caused?

Another question that requires study is—what is the picture of social formation you can get from the relative weight and composition of the various armies. Marx says that the army is often the picture of its social divisions.

Can these armies of the empire help us to look into the class relations and correlation of forces in the internal make-up of the society of that period?

In this connection I will draw the attention of the readers to a letter of Marx on this question:

The history of the *army* brings out more clearly than anything else the correctness of our conception of the connection between the productive forces and social relations. In general, the army is important for economic development. For instance, it was in the army that the ancients first developed a complete wage system. Similarly among the Romans the *peculium castrense* [camp property] was the first legal form in which the right of others than fathers of families to movable property was recognized. So also the guild system among the corporation of *fabri* [artisans attached to the army]. Here too the first use of machinery on a large scale. Even the special value of metals and their use as money appears to have been originally based—as soon as Grimm's stone age was passed—on their military significance. The division of labour *within* one branch was also first carried out in the armies. The whole history of the forms of bourgeois society is very strikingly epitomized here....

In my opinion, the only points which have been overlooked in your account are: 1) The first complete appearance of mercenary troops on a large scale and at once among the Carthaginians.... 2) The development of the army system in Italy in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.... 3) Asiatic military system as it first appeared among the Persians and then, though modified in a great variety of ways, among the Mongols, Turks, etc.... (Marx, Letter to Engels, September 25, 1857.)



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